"CHET"

KATHERINE M. YATES

Mrs Carrie M. Wadsworth
1909
Yreka
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"CHET"

By KATHERINE M. YATES

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"Along came Bess, clinging to the rail, her cheeks red and the wind whipping her hair"

"CHET"

BY

KATHERINE M. YATES

AUTHOR OF "ON THE WAY THERE," "AT THE DOOR,"
"CHEERY AND THE CHUM," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. S. DE LAY

CHICAGO
A. C. McCLURG & CO.
1909

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1909

Published September 4, 1909

Entered at Stationers' Hall, London, England

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The Lakeside Press
R. R. DONNELLEY & SONS COMPANY
CHICAGO

PREFACE

ONCE upon a time — I begin it thus, because it is such a very old story — a person stood before the painting of a sunset. Presently he turned to the artist. "I never saw such colors as those in a sunset," he said.

And the artist looked at him and smiled: — "But, my friend," he said, "don't you wish that you could?"

And so, should any of my readers feel tempted to say: — "I know no children like these," I would reply to them: — "But don't you wish that you did?"

K. M. Y.

CHICAGO, *June 1, 1909.*

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"CHET"

CHAPTER I

THAT OTHER GIRL

"HOW do you suppose Chester will take to having a girl living in the same house with him all the time?"

It was Dad's voice. I sat up in the hammock and wondered if there was anything the matter with my ears. Why on earth should Dad say a thing like that?

The hammock was on the veranda just outside of the dining-room window, and I 'd been asleep in it. It was a blazing hot day, right in the middle of August, and I had gone out there after dinner to make up my mind what I would do that afternoon. It 's funny how quick you 'll go to sleep on a hot day! You 'll be sitting and swinging your feet and kicking your heels on the floor to see how loud you can make the hooks and staples creak; and then you 'll decide, maybe, to go and fix the

latch on the back gate; and you give a good hard kick and turn over and stretch out, just to let the old cat die, — and the hammock goes slower and slower, and you cover your eyes to shut out the bright light, — and then the next thing you know, you find yourself just waking up and feeling all damp and sticky around your collar, and your hair plastered all over your forehead, — and likely as not you feel cross.

That 's the way I felt when I waked up that day; and I was rubbing my face and trying to start the hammock by wriggling, when I heard Dad's voice come through the dining-room window, —

"How do you suppose Chester will take to having a girl living in the same house with him all the time?"

He had been taking a snooze on the wicker couch just inside the window, before going back to the store; and he and Mother must have been talking for some time; but the first I heard was when my name came through the window.

Mother did n't say anything for a minute, and everything was quiet, and I began to think that perhaps I had only had the nightmare; but by

and by she spoke, sort of slow and determined. "Well, Frederick, I don't know," she said; "and I can't help whether he likes it or not. That child's mother was my very best friend, and her daughter is n't going to be sent to any boarding-school as long as I have a home. That is, unless you put your foot down against it."

"Oh, I have n't anything against it," said Dad. "Do as you choose, I don't care; she won't bother me; and if Chester does n't treat her right, just let me know and I 'll settle with him."

Mother sort of sighed, and I heard Dad stamping on his shoes. Then Mother spoke again. "You understand, don't you, Frederick, that she is to stay permanently? She is n't to come here until April; but after that, she is to remain until she is grown up; and she 's only thirteen now, just Chester's age."

"Yes, I understand," said Dad. "Fix it any way you choose only you 'll have to manage her; — I 've got my hands full with Chester. And, by the way, when you get ready to tell him, you would better chloroform him and tie him up, before you break the news," and I heard Dad laugh and start for the door.

"Oh, I 'm not going to tell him for a while," said Mother, anxiously. "I 'm going to wait. He may not like the idea, just at first; but I 'm sure her influence will be good and — "

Gee! That was enough! I did n't care how much Dad "settled" with me; but when it came to the girl and her "influence" — I lit out over the veranda rail.

It 's queer how hard it is to think when anything big and horrid walks up to you. All you seem to be able to do is to sit and stare, with your mind, at the thing, and watch it make faces at you. I could n't think at all that afternoon, for more than half an hour; and then the first thing that really came to me was what a fool I had been to come out to the sweet-apple tree when I was feeling that way. Up to then the sweet-apple tree had always meant fun; and when at last I rolled over in the long grass and wiped the perspiration off of my cheeks with my sleeve, and looked up in the branches and noticed that one of the cleats leading to the crow's-nest was loose; just then it came to me that I had been and spoiled the tree by coming there with something that hurt; — and Bess was coming home that night, too. I rolled

over onto my sleeves again. The tree was Bess's and mine, and here that other girl had gone and spoiled it already. Bess lived next door, and we had been chums for five years, ever since her folks moved there; and now to have some other blamed girl hanging around all the time and having to go everywhere, and do everything that we did, whether we wanted her to or not — you see, that was why I cared most. You can stand just about anything when you 're in the house; but to have any one tagging everywhere you go — it made me so mad that I sat up all of a sudden and doubled up my fists and opened my eyes, — and there, square in front of me, stood Bess.

My mouth just simply dropped open.

Bess burst out laughing. "Well, for goodness' sake, Chet!" she exclaimed, pretending to dodge, "what are you coming at me that way for? You look awfully pleased that I came home. I 'm glad I came."

"'T was n't much use," said I, slamming a dried-up apple at a tree.

Bess looked at me with her head on one side. "Trying to be ugly?" she asked.

"Oh, not at you, of course. I just meant that

our good times are all spoiled. We can't have any more fun."

Bess sat down on the grass. "What you been doing?" she asked. "Did you have to go without your dinner?"

I gritted my teeth. A girl always thinks you're hungry if you don't grin.

"No, I did n't," I said. "I 'm not just blue. It 's real trouble,— trouble for both of us."

Bess shook her head soberly and did n't say anything for a while.

"Want to tell me about it, Chet?" she asked, by and by.

I was gnawing the bark off of a little twig of apple-tree. It sort of relieved me to do it. After a while I got it all chewed off. The bark was kind of bitter, and it was hard to get my mouth fixed so I was sure I could tell Bess about things.

By and by I spoke, real steady. "There 's a girl coming here," I said.

"A girl?" said Bess. "Coming where?"

"Here. To our house."

Bess stared. "How long 's she going to stay?"

"Forever."

"'There 's a girl coming here,' I said" [Page 6]

"No, but really, Chet?"

"That's it. 'Permanently' they said. Until she's grown up."

Bess gasped. "Who is she? What's she coming for?"

"I don't know."

Bess sat and looked at me. "Chet!" she said, almost crossly. "Tell me about it."

"That's all I know," I said.

Bess chewed her lower lip. "Who told you about it?" she asked at last.

"Nobody."

"Oh, Chet!" she exclaimed, suddenly, out of all patience; "why don't you tell me what you know about it, instead of sitting there like a — like a — " she stopped.

"Why don't you say it?" said I, savagely.

"I don't want to," said Bess. "It does n't do any good to call names; — but I think you might tell me, Chester, after saying this much."

"Well, I 'll try to," said I. You see, I was n't meaning to be ugly to Bess; but sometimes you are afraid to go into particulars about things that hurt, because you don't know exactly how your voice is going to act. I tried mine once or twice,

and then I said: "Let 's knock down some apples first."

Bess said "All right," and after we had thrown a lot of kindlings into the tree, I felt better, and we went back and sat down and I told Bess all about what I had heard.

She looked sober enough when I got through. "I wonder what she 's like," she said, jabbing the sod with a little stick. "Don't you know a thing about her, Chet?"

"Not a thing more than I 've told you."

I could see that Bess had one of her "moods" coming on, and I was glad of it. Bess's moods are just as ugly as mine, and it was a sort of relief to see the wrinkles coming between her eyes.

"I don't see the sense to it," she said at last, jabbing the stick so hard that it broke. "Why don't they let her go to boarding-school? If she has n't got any home, that 's the place for her, instead of coming boring other people."

"How 'd you like to go to boarding-school?" I asked. I did n't want the girl to come; but I wanted Bess to see that she was as ugly as I was.

"I would n't go," said Bess. "What 's the sense of saying anything like that, anyway? You

only said it to be unkind. I 'd a lot rather go to boarding-school than to go poking around where I was n't wanted; I can tell you that."

"She can't help it," I said.

Bess got up and stood in front of me stiffly. "Well, all right, Chester Williams," she said; "If you want her to come, why, have her come, — I don't care. I probably sha'n't see much of either of you, so it won't bother me any," and she turned to walk off.

Gee! Here I had been just about holding my breath for two months, waiting for Bess to get home, and now, in half an hour we were squabbling worse than we ever had in our lives before. It made me mad.

"Bess," I said, "what 's the use of your being so blamed unpleasant? You know I don't want her to come,— I 've told you so enough times,— so there is n't anything for us to quarrel about; — but what are we going to do about it? That 's the question. Can't we boycott her? We have n't either of us any use for her; do you suppose we could make it disagreeable enough so she would n't want to stay?"

Bess sat down again and broke off some long

stems of grass, and began twisting them together in her fingers and thinking. Bess is a dandy at planning things, and I began to have hopes.

"Maybe we could," she said at last, "if we are just real polite, but don't pay any attention to her,— treat her as if she did n't interest us at all."

"Which she does n't," I put in. "That 's the thing. We 'll just say 'good-morning' and 'good-night,' and the rest of the time we simply won't know she 's living. Nobody can make a fuss with us, as long as we are polite to her."

"*Over*-polite," said Bess, smoothing out the grass stems over her knee. "And if they make us take her with us anywhere, we 'll treat her like company every minute of the time."

"Good!" said I.

Bess sort of stared, and looked at me suddenly, as if she had just waked up, sort of opening her eyes wide, and blinking them.

"What 's the matter now?" I asked.

Bess pressed her lips together and turned her face away and stared off at the hills far over on the West Virginia side, and her eyes looked as if she wanted to cry.

"What 's the matter?" I asked again, feeling cross. Bess never cries.

She swallowed hard. "I can't do it, Chet," she said.

"Can't do what?"

"Snub her."

"Well, for goodness' sake, Bess!" I said; "what changed you so quick? Two seconds ago you were figuring how you could do it, and now — What struck you?"

"You said 'good,'" said Bess, very low.

"Well," I said, "it *is* a good plan. What 's the matter with it?"

"It is n't good," said Bess. "It 's everything but good. It 's selfish and mean and unkind,— and we have n't any right to do it."

"Well, she has n't any right to come here."

"She can't help it."

They were the very words I had used five minutes before; but it was different when she said them, and my temper was up in a second.

"All right," I said; "take her part if you want to, — I don't care,— only you need n't expect me to be traipsing around with you two all the time. There 's lots of boys in town.

Bob Stevens and I can always have plenty of fun."

"Oh, Chet!" Bess thinks Bob Stevens is about the worst there is, and so does Mother. I don't like him so awfully well, myself, he's too rowdy, and it's catching; but we do have fun, such as it is.

"Well," I said, "what else is there for me to do? If you're going to make a chum of that other girl, I've got to go with somebody, haven't I? I'm not going to flock by myself, and I'm not going to play gooseberry all the time, either. I know how it is when two girls get together."

Bess sat still, nibbling the end of her thumb, a little habit she has when she's thinking. "Chet," she said at last; "let's be right down honest and sensible. You know I don't want her to come here any more than you do; — but we can't help her coming, just the same. Here we've been ugly and quarrelling, and that certainly isn't the other girl's fault; so we'd better look at ourselves and find out what there is in us that makes things seem horrid."

I stared at Bess hard. She was always a great hand to think, and to dig out reasons and causes;

and I always liked to hear her talk things out of a tangle; but I could n't see how we were the least bit to blame in this case, not the least bit. Why, anybody would feel the way we did about it. It was perfectly natural. "What do you mean," I asked.

"Well," said Bess, "when there is inharmony, we have to look to ourselves for the reason."

"'Inharmony'! Gee, where 'd you get the big word?"

Bess flushed. "I can use it if I want to, I guess," she said, putting up her chin. Then she laughed. "But 'harmony' is a nicer one, is n't it?" she asked.

"Been studying the dictionary in Boston?"

"No," Bess laughed again, "not the dictionary. But say, Chet, really, you can see that this is all our own fault. It 's just because we 're selfish."

I got up.

"What are you going to do?" asked Bess.

"Going to see Bob Stevens. What are you going to do?"

"Going to love that other girl," said Bess, sturdily; and we walked off in opposite directions.

CHAPTER II

BESS AND I DO SOME ENTERTAINING

I WENT and sat in the hammock again. It seemed a week since I had stretched out there after dinner; and here it was only four o'clock, and Bess had got back, and she and I had squabbled, and that other girl was coming, and everything was at logger-heads, — whatever they are. I swung, and kicked the railing, and yanked the hammock, and jabbed at the clematis frame with my feet. It 's funny how you feel like smashing something when things go wrong! Of course my face was dirty and streaked and so was my blouse, and my necktie was untied. Bess must have thought I looked nice! I kicked the railing harder than ever. There was no use in going over to Bob Stevens' that late in the afternoon; — and I did n't want to see him anyway. Just to think of him, made me feel like punching him. Bess had no right to say I was selfish.

Just then a young man came around the corner of the house. He was about twenty, and his eyes were nice. "Hello, Chet!" he said.

"Hello," I said, sort of weak; for I'd never set eyes on him before in my life.

He laughed. "Want an introduction, do you?" he said, still grinning. "I didn't need one — I knew you at a glance."

I tried to grin, too. He sat down on the upper step and leaned back against the pillar.

"Want a job?" he said.

"Sure," said I, "if it is n't working."

He laughed again. "All right," he said; "There 's no work within ten miles of it — but it does n't begin until after supper, and all you get out of it is this," and he tossed me a little package.

It was a hard, flat package, wrapped in blue paper. I untied the string, and there was a thin wooden box. I knew what was in it, right at a glance. "Gee!" I said, as I unhooked the fastenings and saw the set of compasses that I had been simply aching to have, for a year. There was the compass with two sharp points, and one of the points could be taken off and you could put in another section that had a sort of a pen on the end of it, or one that had a place for a pencil, and there was an extra piece to put in to make one arm longer than the other; — and there was a little

ruler with sixteenths of an inch marked on it; and a wooden triangle; and a brass circle; and a china cup for indelible ink; and a pen; and a brush; and even a little key to be used in putting on and taking off the sections. It was the finest set I ever saw, and I just sat and stared at it and began to think that I was still dreaming,— had been asleep ever since dinner.

"Like it?" asked the young man.

"You bet," said I. "Say, whose is it? What 'd you bring it here for?"

The young man fanned himself with his hat and looked at me, still grinning. "Well, now, Chet, I 'll tell you about it," he said. "I just arrived this afternoon and I want to see the town. I want to see the Ohio River, and the Muskingum, and the earth-works, and a few things like that; and I don't want the bother of hunting them up, and not knowing which is which. So I said to a young lady I know:—'Since you have to stay at home and get acquainted with your father all over again, do you suppose that the "Chet" who has been dinned into my ears for two months would show me the sights of the city?'"

I began to see light.

"'Well,' said she, 'Chet can do it if anybody can; only he 'll walk your legs off.'

"'I 'll take the chances,' said I; and then she brought out that affair and asked me to deliver it for her, and tell you that it is for the civil engineer that you are going to be."

That was just like Bess. She always remembered what I really wanted, at birthdays and Christmas; and here she had brought me this from Boston, and she had sent it over, just the same, after I had been so ugly to her!

The young man was looking off, over the town. The part where we live is up on a hill,— they 've called it the "stockade," ever since Indian times. He pointed to the bluffs more than a mile away, across the Muskingum. "Is that West Virginia?" he asked.

"No," I said. "That 's Harmar Hill. Are you Bess's uncle?"

"Yes. Why is n't it West Virginia?"

"Because it 's Ohio. That 's West Virginia over there, across the Ohio River. How long you going to stay?"

"Maybe a week, — maybe all winter. There

does n t seem to be much but trees in this town,— all I can see is trees and church-steeples."

"It does look like woods, from here, does n't it?" I said. "I never noticed that before. There 's such a lot of hard maples, that you can't see much else."

"That is n't a hard maple in front of your house."

"No. That 's a Tree of Heaven."

"A what?"

"Tree of Heaven. That 's what they call it."

He shook his head and looked thoughtfully at his hands. "I broke off some leaves to examine them," he said.

I giggled.

"— And you can never make me believe there 's any tree like that in Heaven."

"Why did n't you smell of the leaves before you broke them off?" I asked.

"Did n't know it was the proper thing to do. I 'll guarantee that no one ever does both. Really, what is it?"

"Everybody calls it 'Tree of Heaven'; but I 've heard some one say its other name is 'lanthus' — or something like that."

"Oh, that 's the article, is it? — ailantus — Tree of New Haven!"

"They call it 'Tree of Heaven' here," I insisted; "and if you think it smells bad now, you ought to be here when it 's in blossom."

"No, thank you," said he. "I should n't care for anything stronger." He sniffed at his hands and put them behind him and got up. "I think I 'll take these home and soak them until supper-time," he said; "and then, after supper, we 'll begin our exploring expedition."

"All right," said I, and he turned to go. "Say," I called after him; "tell Bess I 've got this and I 'll — I 'll thank her when I see her."

"All O. K." said the young man, and walked off around the house.

I kept on swinging in the hammock. I 'd heard Bess talk about Uncle Rob, ever since she came here, and I knew she had been visiting his folks in Boston; but I did n't know he was coming back with her. It would n't have hurt her to have told me,— but then, of course, she did n't have much chance to while we were under the sweet-apple tree; things were moving too fast! I liked him. He did n't seem "grown-up" at all; and his eyes

had a way of looking as if he liked you, and was interested in what you said.

I was just finishing supper when I heard Bess whistle out in front of the house. I was awfully surprised, for always before, when Bess and I had had a tiff, she had waited for me to come three-thirds of the way towards making up, no matter who was in the wrong; so when I heard her whistle, I hurried out, and there she was with her uncle. "Hello, Chet!" she called; "You don't have to be introduced to Uncle Rob, do you? He said he was talking to you before supper. Father had to go down town on business, and so I 'm going walking with you two, if you don't mind."

"We sure don't mind," said I. "Where shall we go first?"

"Let 's take him up and show him where we go to school," said Bess; so off we started, up the street.

It was only about four blocks, and when we got there, we pointed out the building, and Uncle Rob tried to look interested, and Bess and I did a little talking; but, someway, everything seemed awfully flat. I did n't know quite what was the

matter; but Bess did in a minute, and she began to laugh. "Now," she said, turning to Uncle Rob and folding her hands primly, "we 've entertained ourselves by showing you what interests us most; what shall we do to entertain you?"

Is n't it odd how selfish people are, without even thinking of it?

Uncle Rob laughed. "Don't let me interfere with your pleasure," he said. "If you want to take me over into the school-yard and show me where you cut your names on the fence, and where you sharpen your pencils on the stone-work, and the marks outside of the up-stairs windows where you pound the black-board erasers to get the chalk out, why come along. Maybe we can climb up and look in the windows and you can show me just where you sit, and tell me who sits everywhere else in the room. Come on," and he started toward the building.

And, do you know, those were just about the things that I 'd been thinking that I wished we could do!

"No," I said, "we 'll leave that for the next trip."

"Not much," said Uncle Rob. "Never leave

for the future a woe that you can put into the past real quickly."

I thought that he was going to make us do it in spite of ourselves; but Bess knew that he was only fooling, and so she grabbed his arm; "Stop teasing, Uncle Rob," she said, "and tell us what you most want to see."

"Some mound-builders' works," said Uncle Rob.

"All right," said I. "Look at 'em."

"Where?" said Uncle Rob, craning his neck and looking up and down the street and then up into the tree-tops.

"Right beside you," I said.

And then Uncle Rob drew in his neck and looked at the corner lot, where we were standing. "H'm!" he said. "Isn't that just the way! When we're looking for something wonderful, we always stretch our necks and look a long way off, when, if we'd shorten the focus of our eyes and look close beside us, we'd find something wonderful all the time."

And then he went up the steep, grassy bank, from the sidewalk, onto the raised square of earth with the slanting approaches at each side, and then

across the flat surface of it, and up onto the second raised square, which stood on top of the first. And then he paced off the sides to see how long they were, and sighted to see how high, and had the best time you ever saw, without saying a word or asking a question.

Bess and I sat down on the grassy bank while he was looking about, and I thanked her for the compasses, and we talked about the things that had happened to each of us while she had been away; and by and by the talk drifted around to that other girl again. That is, I brought up the subject. Always before, when we had had tiffs and had got 'em straightened up, Bess had to keep Fletcherizing on them for a long time afterward, and so I was rather surprised that she did n't start in right off, to making a cud of the matter; but she did n't say a word, although I gave her several chances, and so I *had* to; — and at the same time I had to acknowledge to myself that while I had always blamed her for wanting to talk about things when they were all over and settled, the fact was that I had really wanted to talk about them myself, — and thought I did n't.

"Well," I said at last, "what have you decided about that other girl?"

Bess tossed a little handful of grass into the air.

"Going to love her," she said.

"What nonsense!" I exclaimed. You can't, just because you say you 're going to. We don't love people because we want to; but because we can't help it. It 's because they are nice, that we love them."

"Is that so!" said Bess.

"Yes, it is," said I, beginning to feel very much like a philosopher, and swelling up some, in both feelings and words. "We love people because they possess qualities that make them lovable; and we dislike them because they are — are — cranks."

"H'm!" said Bess. "What is a 'crank'? Be honest, Chet."

I looked at the word with my mind, — and looked —

"Be honest, Chet," said Bess, again.

I grinned. "Bess," I said, "a crank is some one who thinks differently from what I do, and does n't hesitate to say so."

Bess laughed and clapped her hands together. "Good, Chet! Good! I 'm proud of you. Now

listen. You say that we like people because of their good qualities?"

"Yep."

"Well, there's Bob Stevens; — Fred Walker likes him awfully well, you like him some, and I don't like him at all."

"That's so," I said.

"Well, Fred Walker is one of the very nicest boys in our school, is n't he?"

"He sure is," I said.

"And he knows Bob better than either of us does."

"He ought to; he 's lived next door to him for two years."

"And you know Bob better than I do."

"Yep. What are you driving at?"

"Now wait. Here are three of us looking at the same fellow in three different ways. Is that because of Bob, — or us?"

I had to stop and think things over. "It 's queer, is n't it?" I said. "Why, there are as many different opinions of him as there are pupils in school, — and some of the teachers have liked him, and some have n't, and have nagged him dreadfully, — and he *was* mean to those."

"Well, then what do you think?"

I was still puzzled. "It looks as if it were the attitudes of people," I said; "but still there are a lot of unpleasant things about Bob. I don't know what to say."

"Well, I've been thinking it over, and this is the way that I've figured it out," said Bess. "It's something as if we held up a pair of scales, and weighed a person's attributes, without knowing that we did it. A pair of scales with two scoops, you know; and we throw into one or the other scoop, our impressions of him; the ideas we get from what we see him do and hear him say, the good things into one scoop and the bad things into the other. And then, if the good things weigh heaviest, we like him; and if the bad things make *that* side go down, — we don't."

"Fine!" I said. "That's exactly the way it is. Why, I've held up a scale that went way, way down on the bad side, and then seen the fellow do one really fine thing, and down would go the good side, and I'd wonder how I ever could have disliked any one who had it in him to do a thing like that." And then I remembered how it was when I had it in for Bob Stevens about a ball of

mine that he lost. Why, I used to find something to chuck into the wrong side of the scales every day, until it weighed so much that I did n't have any use for him at all; — and then, one day, after more than six months of that sort of thing, I saw him do something that was so white, that, gee! there was n't a thing in the bad scoop that could weigh a featherweight against it, — it just simply went up in the air, and though it 's teetered a good deal since, it 's never dropped below the other, not a hair's breadth. And then I saw that Bess did n't like him because she did n't know him very well, and saw only his rowdy ways, and so the bad scoop was away down with her; and Fred Walker knew him better than either of us —

And just then Bess broke in. "Well?" she said.

"I was just trying to see how the idea worked out," I said; "and it looks good to me."

"Well, now," said Bess, spreading her hands out on her knees, "here 's what I 'm going to do about that other girl: — I 'm going to keep my eyes open from the very start, to find things to throw into the good side of the scale, — I 'm going to put in every little wee thing that will help to

weigh down that side, — and I am going to try not to see anything at all to put into the other."

"But there will be things to go into the other side," I said. "There always are."

"Yes," said Bess, "but I 'm not going to see any more than I can help; and when I do see one that I simply can't keep out of the wrong side, I 'm going to — to dissect it; — because if I don't, I might accidentally throw into the wrong scoop something that belongs in the right one, or at least a part of it might belong there, and I 'm not going to take any chances. And then — and then, if it just *has* to go in, I 'm going to make it weigh as light as possible and — and — "

"Yes," I said, "and I suppose you 'll keep slapping down the good scoop all the time, to make *it* weigh as heavy as possible."

"Sure, I will," laughed Bess. "Thank you for the suggestion. That will help some. I believe I 'm beginning to like her already."

"I 'm not," said I; for just then I got a picture of those two girls chumming together and — I did n't like it; and I did n't like the fact that I had to admit to myself that I was selfish, either. I commenced punching holes in the sod with my

knife, and I could feel my lips shutting hard on each other.

Bess looked at me steadily. She knew my moods. "Chet," she said, "you 're making a mistake. It is n't as if it were something we could get around or break down,— it 's something we 've got to face. I 'm going to face it with a smile. Are you going to face it with your lips like that?"

"Yep," I said, jabbing with my knife.

"All right," said Bess. "Let 's talk about the weather now. Oh, but first, have you said anything to your folks about it?"

"No, and I 'm not going to. If the subject once gets started in the house, it 'll be talked all the time, and I can't stand for it. If anybody starts it with me, I 'll tell 'em I know, and ask 'em to kindly shut up."

Bess nodded. "I guess that 's the best way. I don't want to talk about it with others, either. You see, Chet," she added," I don't feel quite quite smooth about it myself. I can talk to you," Bess laughed, "because, knowing how ugly you feel, I have what Father calls a 'holier than thou sensation,' and that is quite pleasant; but I get a wrathy streak sometimes when I think about it,

and then if folks should begin to tell me what I ought to do, or go to teasing me and saying that you and I won't be chums any more after she comes, and things like that,— well, it would make it harder, and I 've got work enough to do on it as it is."

I looked at her. "You 've got — what?"

Bess blushed. "Oh, nothing," she said, "I just — Come, we were going to talk about the weather."

"But what did you say?" I persisted.

Bess hesitated.

"You said you had 'work' to do on it."

"Well, I meant — I meant that — why, if I 've been thinking wrong about anything, it takes some work to come to think right, does n't it?"

"How?" I asked. "What sort of work?"

"Well, if I had learned the wrong way to do examples in multiplication, learned the rule wrong, you know, it would take some work to learn to do them right, would n't it?"

"Yes."

"And if I had learned addition and subtraction wrong, it would make it harder still, would n't it?"

"You 'd have to begin away back and learn 'em over."

"And if I had n't even learned to write down figures correctly?"

"You 'd be in a bad way."

"I 'd have work to do, would n't I?"

"It would look so to me."

"And the time to begin it, would be as soon as I found out that I was wrong?"

"Yep."

"And if I made some mistakes, it would n't be so very wonderful, would it, Chet?"

"Well, I should say not."

"And if there were some problems that I could n't seem to get the right answer to, try as hard as I would?"

"It would be a wonder if you got any of them right, just at first."

"You see," went on Bess, "I 'd have not only to learn the right way; but I 'd have to unlearn the wrong way."

"'Unlearn' is good," I said.

"Well, you know what I mean, Chet. When I would try to do a thing, the wrong way to do it would come to my mind before the right way;

and sometimes I might forget, or just be careless, and do it wrong without thinking, and not notice my mistake, or know what was the matter when the example would n't come out right. You see what I mean by 'unlearning' the wrong way, don't you? I don't know any other word to use."

"I do," said I.

"What is it?"

"Forget it."

"Wh-what? Are you trying to be funny, Chet?" Bess's voice was accusing.

"No. I mean what I said. To learn a thing is to understand and remember it, is n't it?"

"Yes."

"Then to 'unlearn' it, is to forget it, is n't it?"

"Oh, oh!" cried Bess, clapping her hands together, in her soft little way. "That is fine, Chet; perfectly fine! To unlearn it is to understand that it is wrong, and forget it. Oh, that helps me such a lot!"

I looked at Bess and shook my head. I could n't, for the life of me, make out what she was driving at. She had just "supposed" something about learning her arithmetic wrong; and we had fol-

lowed her fancy out, as we always did, and here she was looking just the way I did when I opened that box of compasses.

"Bess," I said, "what 's got you?"

Bess hesitated, and then seemed suddenly to make up her mind, and lifting up her head and looking me squarely in the face, she said,— "Christian Science."

I gasped and stared at her. Bess and I had talked religion together a great deal, and we had always agreed that, to be honest with ourselves, we had to have something we could understand,— something we could study out and figure on, like arithmetic, instead of something we had to commit to memory and believe only because some one said that it was so. We wanted to know that a thing was so because it was reasonable, and would prove, and not just because some one else believed it. And so now, for her to sit up there and say that Christian Science had "got her," it was no wonder I stared.

"Well?" said Bess, as she always did when it was my turn to talk, and I did n't.

"Nothing to say," I said.

"Well," said Bess again, smoothing down her

dress and smiling into her lap, "you might do worse."

"And so," I said at last, "you have decided to take something down in one gulp, like an oyster! I did n't think it of you, Bess. I hope it won't give you indigestion."

"It won't," said Bess. "I never chewed anything so thoroughly in all my life. That 's why I like it. You don't have to swallow a single chunk that chokes."

I shook my head. "You 're mistaken, Bess," I said. "Maybe the chunks are greased and go down so easy that you don't notice."

Bess laughed. "Nope," she said, positively. "What you going to use it for? Your are n't sick, and that 's all it 's for."

"No, it is n't, Chet. You don't know anything about it."

"Yes, I do," I said. "The principal thing is that they don't take medicine."

Just then Uncle Rob came along. He heard what I said, and sat down beside us on the bank. "What 's this you know so much about, Chet?" he said.

"Christian Science. I know all about it."

"You 're lucky," said Uncle Rob.

I felt my face flush. "Well," I said, "I know that the principal thing is that they don't take medicine."

"H'm, if you know it all like that," said Uncle Rob, "it 's — it 's interesting. I don't know all about Christian Science; but I know a little about some other things, in just the same way. For instance, on these great steamships which go across the ocean, it is the uniforms of the captain and the sailors, that take care of the boat. Those blue uniforms understand the ship from stem to stern, they watch the compass and the charts, they know the ocean and issue the orders and obey them, and carry the boat safely through to port. Those uniforms are the principal part of the boat and the trip and everything pertaining thereto. Curious, is n't it?"

I looked at him, a good deal puzzled.

"It does n't look reasonable, does it?" he said.

"It is n't true," I blurted out.

"But I know it in just the same way that you know what *you* said."

"But the uniforms don't have anything to do with the boat, at all."

"No?" asked Uncle Rob. "Think a little. Why does the captain wear his?"

"So that people can find him," I said. "When folks see that, they know that he is on deck, attending to business and that the boat is being handled right. It 's a sort of a guaranty that things are in the hands of some one who knows how."

"And the sailors' uniforms?"

"Same thing. They show where the sailors are and that there are plenty of them, and what sort of looking fellows they are, and that they are attending to their duties. The uniforms give confidence, of course."

"And is that all they are good for?"

"Well, all except to keep the men warm, and protect them."

"Yes," said Uncle Rob, "that is something, is n't it? To keep the men in them comfortable no matter what the weather; — so that they can go about their duties and not be thinking to whether they are going to be warm or cold when the next breeze blows. Still, you think that the uniforms are not the principal thing about the boat and voyage?"

"No," I said. "Was what I said as far off the track as that?"

"Farther. Your remark would be something like this: — 'The principal thing about a big steamship and its trip is that the officers and sailors do not wear frock coats.'"

I know I looked foolish.

"Now listen just a minute, Chet," he went on, "I want to correct this idea of yours. The simile is not nearly perfect; but it will serve. In the first place, the principal thing about Christian Science is not negative, as you put it, something that they *don't* do. Nothing could stand upon a negative principle. In the second place, neither is the principal thing the fact that they heal without medicine, as you probably intended to imply. There is something as much greater back of the physical healing, as the intelligence which handles the great ship is greater than that which shows where to find it."

I pondered for a few minutes. "That sounds interesting," I said.

"It is," said Uncle Rob. "It is the most interesting and fascinating study in the world, and

gathers interest as you proceed. And, Chet, do you realize how much value that point has? Interest makes us lose sight of difficulties, as such, in the fascination of studying the methods of overcoming them."

"I want to know more about it," I said. "It sounds 'different,' someway. But what makes so many people think that the healing is the main thing?"

"Don't you suppose that there were many who, in Jesus' time, told of him only with reference to the healing and the loaves and fishes, even after hearing his wonderful sermons? It is because people don't think and investigate for themselves. They take the statement of some one who is not able to grasp anything higher than mere physical manifestation, and accept it without question, and pass it on."

"But that is n't fair," I said.

Uncle Rob smiled good-naturedly. "Chet," he said, "had I known nothing about Christian Science a few moments ago when you yourself made that very statement, you would have said what you did just the same, and I might have been misled."

I felt my face burn. "But I didn't know anything about it," I said.

"No, but you said that you knew *all* about it,— and then made the statement."

"I was n't fair," I admitted. "I had n't any right to say it; for I did n't know."

"Neither does any one else who makes the same statement," said Uncle Rob. "Now I want to ask you some questions about these earth-works."

"Don't know any more about those than I did about Christian Science."

Uncle Rob laughed. "Have n't you ever paced these squares off and studied the proportions of them and wondered what sort of instruments were used?"

"No," I said, "I have n't."

"And you are planning to be a civil engineer, and have taken no concern in this work, done with such accuracy, hundreds and hundreds of years ago?"

I looked around at the upper square, with a new interest. "Well," I said, "I 'm so used to seeing them, you know, that I 've never thought much about them, — never thought of them in that way, at all."

Uncle Rob shook his head slowly. "Chester, Chester! And people coming here all the time, from all over the country, just to see them! I think you 'd better short-focus your own eyes a little."

CHAPTER III

THE PICNIC AT BLENNERHASSET ISLAND

ON the way home we caught up with Bob Stevens and his sister. Flo Stevens is a mighty pretty girl and has stunning big gray eyes. She 's about eighteen. I introduced Uncle Rob and we had a lot of fun; for Bob was in one of his best moods, and he 's dandy company when he wants to be.

Is n't it odd how people make their names like themselves? Now there 's Bob Stevens and Uncle Rob, both with the same name to start with; — but no one in the world would ever think of calling Uncle Rob, "Bob." I don't know exactly why, because he is n't starchy or prim, not the least bit; and he made me begin calling him "Uncle Rob," right at first; — but there 's nothing rowdy nor harum-scarum about him. He knows where he 's "at," every second of the time; and while he 's full of fun and can say the most ridiculous things I ever heard, yet there 's a certain fine dignity about him, that would keep you from calling him "Bob," even if he were your chum.

With Bob Stevens it 's different. He 's a sort of happy-go-lucky, what 's-the-difference-it 's-all-in-a-lifetime kind of a fellow; — doing things he should n't, just because he wants to, — and then kicking himself afterward; — and then doing the same thing over again; — so really "Bob" just fits him. That is, it fits him on the outside; but there are things underneath, that you catch a glimpse of only once in a great while when you know him real well; — things that make you feel like calling him "Robert" and being proud to know him. Folks think him rowdy and conceited, — until they catch a glimpse of his real self.

Bob and Flo came on down to our house and we all sat on the veranda for a while. Uncle Rob and Flo sat up on the swinging seat, and Bess and Bob and I sat down on the steps and began talking about school. Bob said he hated like the dickens to start in; that he was sure he would scrap with the teacher because he 'd been sent up there for a reprimand, from the lower rooms, two or three times; and you know you never like a person who has only seen you when you are in disgrace. It really does n't give a fellow a fair show when he begins to go to school to that

teacher; for they both start in looking for trouble. Bob said he did n't care, though, — that he could take care of himself, and he 'd bet the teacher would have more trouble than he would.

"That makes it look as if things would be pretty lively in our room," said Bess.

"They sure will," said Bob. "I 've always been to a woman-teacher before, and that sort of handicaps one; but I 'll show Mr. Maxon a few things."

Bess leaned back against the pillar and looked at him with a little smile. "What 's the use?" she said.

"Well, I 'm going to show him that he can't run over me."

"How do you know he wants to?"

Bob hesitated. "Well, he can't," he said at last.

Bess bent forward, with her chin on her hand and her face quite close to his, in the gloom, and a smile on her mouth. "Bob," she said, "you make yourself a lot of trouble, don't you?"

Bob threw back his head. "No," he said. "I have more fun than any other fellow in town. I do exactly as I please."

"No, you don't," said Bess. "The most of the time you do things that you don't want to."

"Well, I just do not!" said Bob.

Bess nodded. "Yes, you do. I have eyes, Bob."

Bob straightened back his shoulders and looked at her rather insolently. "Oh, you have, have you? Well, what is the first thing that your eyes would notice about me?"

Bess went on smiling. "Well," she said, "'most any one would say that it was conceit and egotism —" Bob looked pleased, but gave a little ironical sniff; "but," went on Bess, "*I* should say that you hate yourself more than any other person I ever saw."

Bob's face changed and the arrogance went out of his shoulders. He humped over and sat with his chin on his hands, not saying a word. We all three sat silent for quite a long time. By and by Bob spoke, his voice very low. "You 're right, Bess," he said; "but no one ever saw it before. I don't do what I want to — I do what I *make* myself do; because I don't know how to be myself. I try to make a show of being independent,

that 's all. You see, once when I was a kid—" he stopped.

"Go on," said Bess.

"Oh, I don't want to bore you with the 'story of my life,'" he said.

"Go on," said Bess.

"Well, I was only eight years old, and one evening I was out in front of the house, fooling around with a rope. It was an old clothes-line — I don't know where I got it; but I was just fooling with it, and I thought it would be fun to tie the dog up to the hitching-post and play he was a horse. The post was holding still and the dog was n't, and so I tied one end of the rope to the post and took the other end and started after the dog. I chased him across the street and had just got him by the collar, when along came a man on a bicycle, and it was dusk, and he did n't see the rope, and pitched over it. It broke his machine all to pieces and smashed him up some, and I was scared to death and hid behind a tree. He was the maddest man you ever saw, — and then the dog began to bark and that gave me away, and he came over and grabbed me and asked me where I lived. I told him; but I was too scared to say anything

else, and he walked me over to the house and told Father what I'd done, and said I'd put the rope across the street on purpose to trip people up, and had jerked it when he came along. I suppose he thought I did.

"Father would n't let me say a word to explain; but went out and looked at the rope, and then took me up stairs and thrashed me; — the first time I'd ever had a real thrashing in my life. He used a piece of the rope to do it. Then he told me that I was n't to go out of the house for one month,— that it was n't safe for a person like me to be at large. He never let me say one word about how it happened. When I would try to tell him, he 'd press his lips together and say: — 'I don't wish to hear anything about it — I saw the rope.' Mother and Flo were away that Summer, so I was all alone.

"For one month I never set my foot outside of the house, not even onto the veranda; and during the whole time, I was just sitting and staring at the injustice of it all. A kid eight years old can do an awful lot of thinking in a case like that, and it lasts him for a mighty long time. When any of the boys asked Father where I was,

he said I was staying in the house because I was n't to be trusted outside. He thought it would be a lesson to them, too.

"And, so when at last I did come out, I found that I had the reputation of being a regular tough. The boys had told their folks, and their folks had forbidden them to play with me. At first I did n't know what to do. It hurt and I was ashamed and miserable and just about wanted to die; and then, by and by I noticed that the other kids looked at me with a sort of awe and admiration, and I found that everything I did was made ten times worse, because I was supposed to be so bad; and so I thought it over and decided that if I was going to have the name of being tough, I might as well have the fun of it. I was just a little kid, you know, less than nine years old.

"And that way, I got to doing things just out of daring, — to make the boys open their eyes, — not because I wanted to,— and I 've done that sort of thing ever since. You see, that one little incident, that was only thoughtlessness, that I never meant at all, has grown to where it has put every fellow's hand against me,— and put me where I deserve to have them against me."

Bess had been sitting very quiet. She put out her hand then. "Here 's one that is n't against you; but for you," she said.

He took it, but did n't speak; and then I shoved out mine without saying a word, and he gripped it; — then he got up. "Come on, Flo," he said, "It 's time to go home if you're going to friz your hair for the picnic to-morrow."

Flo jumped out of the swinging seat. "That 's so," she said, running her fingers through her fluffy hair. "Picnic starts for Blennerhasset Island at nine in the morning, so there 's work for me and the curl-papers."

"You going, Bob?" I asked.

"No," said Bob, "I 've got to make some collections for Father and I can't get away so early. But say, here 's an idea! I can go right away after dinner, and I 'll get out the double team and we 'll drive down there,— the three of us,— it 's only a little over twelve miles, — and row over to the island. We can have supper with the crowd and then take Flo in and drive back by moonlight. What do you say?"

It sounded perfectly good to us, and so we all

agreed without any coaxing, and then Bob and Flo went off home.

Next morning Bob stopped as he went by, to say that his father would let him have the horses, all right, but that he could n't get away until three-thirty. It was a dandy day, and Bess and I and Uncle Rob spent the morning out under the sweet-apple tree, Bess darning and Uncle Rob reading to us about Blennerhasset and Aaron Burr, so as to get "in the atmosphere," he said; and I brought out a picture of the Blennerhasset house, painted by a woman in town who never took any lessons, and who traded the picture to Dad in exchange for a frame for another one. It was all right, only you know the house was built on a curve, sort of like a horse-shoe, and in the picture you could n't tell whether the curve was toward you or away from you, or whether it stood up in the air like an arch; — it appeared a different way every time you looked at it, and kept you sort of worried for fear that something was the matter with your eyes. She had put some of this shiny flitter all over the trees and roof, too, to make it rich, she said. It was n't meant

for snow, because the trees were all green, awfully green, and the flitter was part red, and pink, and yellow, and all sorts of colors. Uncle Rob said he was glad he saw the picture, because it made him feel differently toward Aaron Burr; for a great deal might be excused in a fellow who was in a habit of seeing things like that. Bess took the picture away from me and put in under her darning basket; because she said that she could n't forget it while it was in sight. We remembered the picture afterward, when we were coming back from the picnic; — but it was n't hurt any. Dad said we ought to have been more careful of it for he had to give as good as two frames for it, because the woman had painted the other picture on both sides of an academy-board, and had to have it framed on both sides. It was the same scene, only one was in winter and the other in summer, and she wanted them so that she could have out the one which fitted the season best. She was an awfully clever woman. The summer scene had swans on the water, and in the winter one, she changed them into icebergs. It changed the size of things so, by comparison, that when you looked at first one and then the other, you

felt as if you were having the "bigs and littles." It 's a lucky thing that she could n't have them both out at the same time.

After dinner Bess and Uncle Rob came over and we waited for Bob. At three-thirty, sharp, he drove up, and, say, the horses were feeling fine. We made Uncle Rob sit with him, on the front seat, because the scenery would all be new to him; but Bess and I sat with our chins on the back of the seat the most of the way.

"Pretty good horses," said Uncle Rob, when we were started.

"Yep," said Bob. "They 've only one fault, and that 's when they see a railroad train."

"Scared?" asked Uncle Rob.

"No," said Bob. "They don't wait to be scared!"

"What do they do?" asked Uncle Rob.

"Don't know. They never do it twice alike."

"Any railroad tracks where we 're going?"

"All the way down one side of the road."

"Sounds interesting," said Uncle Rob. "What 's on the other side?"

"Thirty foot bank and the Ohio River."

"More interesting still," said Uncle Rob.

I knew that Bob was testing his nerve; but he did n't scare for a cent.

"Well," said Bob, seeing that Uncle Rob was game, "there is n't any danger, for Father would n't let me take the team unless I 'd promise to get out and hold them by the bits when the trains passed; — and, anyway, there is n't a train more 'n a couple of times a day."

"And you 're going to get out and hold 'em if a train comes?" I asked, for I knew that Bob was a splendid driver.

"I said I would," said Bob. "I would anyway," he added, "with a girl in."

We crossed the bridge over the Muskingum and drove through the west side of town, and Bob pointed out where the old Fort Harmar used to stand; and by and by we swung into the river road, and it sure was fine! The day was gorgeous, and all along the river bank were great masses of trumpet-flower in full bloom, loaded down with deep orange clusters of sturdy, long-tubed flowers, and glossy, sharp-cut leaves. We always called it Virginia creeper; but that is n't the right name. And all about and mixed with it was wild clematis gone to seed, clambering madly all over and about

it and tangling and untangling itself, and veiling everything with the smoky streamers of its seed-whorls. The vines wrestled with each other clear down to the water, and that was yellow, as usual, and scarcely rippling at all; — and away over on the other side, a half a mile across, were the blue Virginia hills. It was warm and still, with just a little rustle of the leaves, and now and then the splash of a catfish in the water. It seems to me that I never saw the colors so beautiful before; and Uncle Rob was so enthusiastic over everything, that we were all desperately proud because all of this "belonged" to us. I believe that the only time we ever seem to realize that everything beautiful really belongs to each one of us, is when we take some one to see some particular place or thing that he has never seen before. We feel, for the moment, all the pride of possession, and all of the generosity and delight of sharing a real treasure with him. (Is n't it odd how words and phrases come, and arrange themselves right, when we are thinking big thoughts? I believe we 'd all use better language, if we thought better thoughts. I know I surprise myself sometimes, when I forgot the way I 'm saying things,

in the interest of what I 'm thinking. The smartest part of me is the part that gets away when I look for it.)

Well, sir, all along that drive, Bess and I and Bob felt exactly as if we had a big paper bag of good things and were passing them out one at a time, and watching to see how Uncle Rob would enjoy the flavor of each. Whenever we 'd come to a bend in the road where we knew there would be a particularly beautiful view, we 'd lean away forward and give a glance to see if it was still there; and then we 'd watch Uncle Rob's face, to see how he liked our latest gift. I tell you we surely did have a fine time. If we 'd owned every foot of the country in sight, we would n't have felt one scrap prouder or more important.

By and by I saw Bess suddenly prick up her ears. "What is it?" I asked.

"Thought I heard a train coming."

Bob stopped the horses and listened; but there was no sound. "False alarm," said Uncle Rob. We went on.

In about a minute the sound came again. It was a peal of thunder. "There, that 's what I

heard!" said Bess. "It was farther off, and I thought it was the rumbling of a train."

"Where does it come from?" said Uncle Rob. "It sounds like 'a bolt out of a clear sky.'"

We could n't see any clouds then; for the hills cut them off; but in a few moments the birds began calling and flying about wildly, and little ripples went fluttering all over the water; and then, suddenly the sun was put out, and the sky went black, all in a minute.

"Coming up fast, is n't she?" said Uncle Rob. "Any shelter near?"

"Nope," said Bob. "Not a thing."

"Well, suppose we put up the side-curtains — and look pleasant."

We got the curtains up just in time, and then the storm broke. Gee, but it was a corker! The rain just simply slopped over as if something up above was too full; and the thunder and lightning kept up a steady squabble to see which would get there first. It was like being right in the middle of Balaklava; and every time that the artillery went off, which was all the time, those horses did stunts. You never saw anything like it.

They tried to go backward and forward and up in the air at the same time, and they pretty near did it. I don't see how Bob ever kept them in the road; but there was n't any other place for 'em to go except into the river, and so it was up to him. As the storm went on, they kept getting worse — sort of accumulating more scare all the time — and by and by Bob said that he guessed Bess would better get out, even if it was pouring — that is, if he could hold 'em still long enough — but he could n't. Every time he would try to stop 'em they 'd back, and keep on backing and doing sixteen other things at the same time, and so after two or three attempts, he said, —

"Bess, I think it 's too wet for you to get out."

"I think so too," she said. "I did n't bring my rubbers," and then we all laughed. Bess held her nerve beautifully.

We kept on down the road, and gradually the horses quieted some, although the storm did n't seem to die down much.

"Nice day for a picnic," said Uncle Rob.

"All kinds of a fine day," said Bob.

"Going to sit on the grass and eat sandwiches for supper, I suppose, Bess?"

"No, I 'm going to sit on the book you were reading this morning, if you have it with you."

"I have n't, Bessie, my dear. It lies under the sweet-apple tree, along with your darning and the picture of the wonderful house which flaps its wings like a jub-jub bird. It is no longer dry. You 'll have to stand on one foot while you eat your sandwiches. That way, you can keep the other from getting wet."

"They 'll be soaked through and through," moaned Bess.

"What? Your feet or the sandwiches?"

"No, no! Everything — everybody at the picnic."

"They certainly will," said Uncle Rob.

"Want to turn around?" asked Bob.

"Indeed no," said Uncle Rob, "not unless the rest of you have a chill in your ardor. A wet picnic is likely to be interesting. Maybe it was at such a one that the lady got the conception of her picture of the house." I giggled and Bess looked mystified.

The storm was still holding on pretty steadily, and the thunder seemed to stay right overhead, and it took all of Bob's attention for the horses,

though they were behaving a lot better than they had been. "Do you think we'd better go back, Bob?" asked Bess.

Bob shook his head. "This sort of thing just makes me want to win," he said. "I hate to be worsted!"

So we kept on, and the storm kept right along with us, and the road got to be something dreadful. We were n't much wet; for the storm had not gotten in front of us; but the horses were perfectly soused.

We were between two and three miles above the island, when Bess pricked up her ears again. She has awfully quick hearing. "What was that?" she said.

"Sounded like a fog-horn," said Uncle Rob.

"It was n't," said Bess, with conviction. "Look out."

Uncle Rob leaned out and looked through the wet trees along the bank, the moist twigs slapping his face; then he turned back. "That, Bessie, my dear, was the whistle of a steam-boat, — a fine large steamboat working her way up the river. On board, she has a picnic party — a wet but happy picnic party, which will eat its

sandwiches sitting upon nice dry chairs in the cabin. Is there anything more that you wish to know?"

We all leaned out and watched the boat pass up the river. "A pretty boat, is n't she?" said Uncle Rob. "And there is music aboard, and dancing,— and *sandwiches!* You don't happen to have a sandwich with you, do you, Elizabeth? — one that is n't working?"

Bess shook her head. "If I had, it would n't go begging for shelter," she said.

Bob grinned. "There 's a chocolate sundae in one of my pockets," he said. "It was chocolate creams when I started; but the last time that I put my hand in, I could n't recognize them. I 'm not offering you any, because the pocket would have to go with them, and I need it."

We had passed the boat very quickly; for the horses were still tearing along and keeping Bob busy with the reins; but presently I got interested. "Where you going, Bob?" I asked.

"Don't know," said Bob.

"Why don't you turn around?" said I. "Don't you know when Fate has worsted you?"

"Chet," said Uncle Rob, — "I saw you run-

ning on the top rail of the fence this morning. Why did n't you turn around?"

"Could n't stop long enough," I said; — "and if I could, it was n't wide enough to turn on."

"Same here," said Bob. "This road has a hill on each side, — one goes up and the other goes down, — and we don't want to do either."

Well, we went more than a mile farther before we found a place where we could turn around, and that brought us into a small town. Bob said that we could get out and go back on the train if we wanted to — if there should happen to be a train; — but we were all game and decided to stick to him and take our chances. So we turned around and started back. The thunder and lightning were about over; but it was raining in sheets, and as soon as we turned, it drove straight into the carriage so that Uncle Rob came back onto the back seat with Bess and me. Bob would have come back, too, only the lines were n't long enough to reach, and as he had forgotten to put in the apron, he stood for a good soaking.

And then that rambunctous storm saw that we were giving it the slip, and it stopped for a moment, and then came back after us, full tilt! Gee,

it landed on us from all directions at once, and the thunder and lightning had a catch-as-catch-can wrestling match, square over our heads. It sure was a great show, and the horses got hold of a lot of new stunts they had n't thought of before, and things got as interesting as they were on the way down; — and then, at last, when there came a little lull in the storm, we heard a train whistle!

Bob tried to pull up. "Guess we 'd better all get out," he said. "The track is right above us here, and the horses are ugly enough now; — and anyway, I will have to." So he drove as slowly as he could, and got the horses quieted down some, and luckily there was no hard thunder for a few minutes, and Uncle Rob climbed over the seat and took the lines, and then Bob jumped out and got to their heads, and between the two of them, they brought us to a standstill, — or nearly so. Then Bess and I got out and stood in the gutter, because it was better than the mud, and Uncle Rob took one horse's head and Bob kept the other, and then we stood and waited for the train. We could hear it rumbling nearer and nearer, and the boys took a fresh grip on the bits and — we kept on waiting.

By and by the rumbling seemed to begin to grow fainter. Uncle Rob cocked his head. "Wind 's changing," he said.

Then, suddenly, Bess snickered, and at the same moment came a faint, weak little whistle screech, and Bob and I looked the way she was pointing, and there, clear across the river, half a mile away, was a nice little railroad train, trundling along as innocently as could be!

For one second Bob looked as if he was going to say something to match the expression of his face; and then he caught sight of Uncle Rob, who was standing with his back that way, his feet planted ankle deep in the red clay and both hands on the bit of his horse, — and he grinned, instead.

"Hold hard there!" he said, — "there 's the train!"

Uncle Rob turned and looked across the river. "H'm," he said, interestedly, "passenger train, is n't it? Two coaches and a mail car. Nice little train."

"Yes," said Bob, "engine 's got a smoke-stack, a cow-catcher, and a tender. 'Most as pretty as the boat, is n't it?"

Then we all laughed.

"Think it 's safe to go in out of the rain now?" asked Uncle Rob. "Nice horsie. They maligned you! You are n't afraid of railroad trains, are you? You never so much as batted an eye when that one went by."

Then we all piled back into the carriage, taking a part of the country road with us.

"It 's a shame," said Bob, "to have got you all out that way; but I forgot all about the railroad on the other side of the river; — and this road is so desperately narrow right here, and besides, I 'd promised."

"No apology necessary," said Uncle Rob. "We owe you a vote of thanks for having the train go by on the other side, instead of over here. Much obliged to you."

Bob laughed, and we started on again. The storm had settled down into a steady rain and blow with a good deal of thunder and lightning, and the road got to be something awful. The clay gathered on the horses' feet and then more stuck to that, and then more to that, until they looked as if they were walking with a peck measure on each foot; and the road was as slippery as grease, and there were washouts every little ways.

By and by it began to get dark, and I began to get worried. There had been some washouts when we came down, and I knew they 'd be enough sight worse by now; and in the dark, and with those nervous horses — well, things did n't look good to me, — not a bit, they did n't.

Once or twice we lurched pretty hard, and so, after a while I unbuttoned the curtain of the carriage on my side, the side away from the river, and rolled it up.

"What are you doing that for?" asked Uncle Rob.

"It 's close in here," I said.

The carriage lurched again and the horses did some struggling. The night had become perfectly black, and we had no carriage-lamps. "Say," I said, "I 've been sitting this way until I 'm cramped to pieces. Let 's change places."

"How?" asked Uncle Rob.

"Why," I said, "you sit on this side and take Bess on your lap. That 'll give us all more room."

"All right, Chet," said Uncle Rob, and we changed; - and when there came a flash of lightning, I saw that he was sitting away forward with Bess on his knees, and one foot out on the step

of the carriage, — and then I knew that he had understood.

After that we were all very quiet. The wind blew and rattled the carriage curtains, the wheels lurched and slid, and the horses snorted and struggled through the greasy clay. Bob had not spoken for a long time; but with every flash of lightning I could catch a glimpse of his face, very white, and wet, and his jaw set hard.

"Are you frightened, Bess?" I said, after a while; for she was so quiet.

"No," she said, and her voice was perfectly natural.

"Then why don't you talk?"

"I — I have some thinking to do," she said.

I said "all right." To tell the truth, I was doing some pretty hard thinking, myself, and was n't absolutely in need of conversation.

Presently, in the glare of a flash of lightning, I thought I saw something that made me lean forward and wait for another flash. When it came, I caught my breath. There was a long streak of blood across Bob's white cheek.

I waited a moment. I did n't want to frighten Bess. The next flash showed more blood which

he was trying to wipe away with a red-streaked hand.

"What 's the matter, Bob?" I asked, and I knew that my voice sounded odd and strained.

Bob did n't answer for a moment, and then the words came thick and sulky: — "I've got the blamed nosebleed, and I 've used up all my handkerchiefs!"

The relief was so great that we all burst out laughing, and then I knew that Bess and Uncle Rob had seen, too. Bob joined in the laugh as well as he could, and reached for the first of the three handkerchiefs which were thrust over his shoulder.

The laugh had broken the strain, and somehow, although there was still a mile or so of dreadful road before us, we seemed to have gotten all over our worry, just as if we were on safe ground again. Uncle Rob started in, half joking and half in earnest: — "Now, Bess, if this vehicle begins to keel toward the river, I 'm going to throw you out, and it will be up to you to catch hold of something on that hillside out there. Have your fingernails and toe-nails and teeth ready, and don't let anything get away from you; for if you slide

back into the clay of this road, it will take a derrick to get you out, and a flat car to get you to where we can remove a few tons of superfluous soil."

"All right," said Bess; "but please choose a place where there are no thistles. I saw whole beds of them on that bank, as we came down."

"So did I," said Uncle Rob. "They had nice big purple blossoms on them, and pretty, feathery, fly-away seeds; — but I have n't seen any at all for more than an hour, so don't worry."

"No, nor you have n't seen anything else either. Never mind. Toss me where you choose. I 'm not afraid." And I honestly believe that she was not.

It was queer how the weight seemed to have lifted off of all of us. I am perfectly sure that if anything had happened then, we would have had our wits about us so well that we would have known just what to do, and would n't have been hurt at all. It makes a lot of difference, when you are in danger, whether you are scared stiff, or have yourself so well in hand that you are all on the alert to meet whatever comes and do the best thing, right on the spur of the moment. That 's why a coward is always getting hurt; — he gets

rattled and has no confidence, and then the least thing bowls him over, because his wits are all in a jumble and not in working order. At least, that 's the way I look at it.

Well, by and by we came to where the road turns away from the river, and we jolted over the railroad track, and pretty soon we were back in town — and then across the bridge — and then up the hill to our street.

Gee, but we were hungry! We had n't had a thing to eat since dinner, and it was nine o'clock. Bess wanted us all to go into her house and help her make a raid on the refrigerator; but Bob could n't, because he said he had to get the horses into the stable first of anything. So we all leaned over and shook hands with him and told him what a perfectly fine time we 'd had; and he said he hoped to be able to repeat it in detail some time, and Uncle Rob said to be sure to give him plenty of advance notice, as he was liable to be called away on business suddenly, and would n't want to miss the chance of being called away at the right time. You never saw a wet crowd in such good spirits in your life, and we laughed and chaffed, until Bob had turned the corner.

I had to go home to get into some dry clothes before eating. Bess had run up the steps and I looked after her. "Has n't she got the most grit of any girl you ever saw?" I said to Uncle Rob.

"She has something better than grit, Chester," he said. "Grit puts you on a tension — confidence leaves you normal. Which has the best 'staying power,' do you think? Turn that over in your mind a little — it 's interesting," and he ran up the steps after her.

CHAPTER IV

DOWNS AND UPS

THE next morning, right after breakfast, I went out to the sweet-apple tree and whistled until Bess came out. She came running down the board-walk, her braids flying and her arms waving wildly, and I knew right off that there was something in the wind. As soon as she was within shouting distance, she began, —

"Oh, Chet, Chet, what do you think? I'm going to take a trip with Father, and I'm going to Chicago, and Indianapolis, and everywhere! Oh, I'm so glad, I'm so glad!"

I was n't!

Bess saw in a minute, how I felt, and a good deal of the shine went out of her face. She dropped down onto the grass and sat smoothing her dress over her knees and pursing her lips.

"It *is* kind of mean, is n't it?" she said, a lot of change in her voice. "I'm just as selfish as I can be — not to think of anybody but *ME!* But, Chet," and she looked up at me, part of the light coming back into her eyes; "it 's going to be awfully nice; for you know how much I 've always wanted

to go wandering, and Father is going to have me travel alone some of the time, so I can learn to have confidence; and I 'm going to take my type-writer, and — "

"When you going?" I asked.

"To-morrow night."

I sat down and began whittling a cleat for the crow's-nest. I knew I ought to be glad for her: but I was n't. I had been dreadfully lonesome while she was away, — and now to have her going traipsing right off again — well, I was n't mad, but I was all-fired blue.

"What about school?" I said.

"Why, I 'll miss some, of course," said Bess; "but Father thinks that the trip will be of a lot more use to me. He has it all planned out. We 're going to Chicago first, and he 's going to leave me there for a few days, or a week; and then he 's going to take me to Indianapolis, and I 'll be there for a week or more, and then I 'll go by myself to Columbus, Ohio, and he 'll meet me there; then I 'll go alone to Washington, and he 'll come there; and then to some other places, I forget some of them, and then back to Chicago, and then home."

"What 's his idea in tiring you all out with a long trip like that?"

"Well, I told you, he wants me to see the places, and to learn to take care of myself, and he wants to have me with him some, and — and — "

"And what?"

Bess hesitated, and picked a head of timothy to pieces. "Well, I 'll tell you, Chet," she said, at last, and I saw the red come up into her face; "You know I learned to use the type-writer last winter, and when I went East, Father told me I could take it with me, if I would promise to write him long letters on it. He says it 's a great thing to learn to think on a type-writer; because you can write so fast that you don't lose your best thoughts before you can get them down. And so I 've been writing him long letters all Summer; — not so much about places and people and things, but about what places and people and things made me think, — and about what happened to me. And — " Bess picked harder at the timothy, " — and Father says they were very good letters indeed," — I nodded. I knew what those type-written pages were like! — " and that — well, he said a good many things about them, — and

he wants me to go around some, and have experiences, and write to him about them. He says it will be good practice and — and — " Bess stopped.

I laid down the cleat and looked at her. I someway felt as if I had suddenly caught a glimpse of something very wonderful,— something I 'd known was there all the time, but had not really sensed; and I felt awed and startled. I suddenly knew that the type-written letters that Bess had sent to me, were not interesting only because they were from some one I knew and liked, but because they were clever and full of unusual things; and I knew that the things in them which had made me laugh, were the sort of things that would make others laugh, and the things that had made me swallow hard, would make lumps come in the throats of other people. I think I felt a little afraid of Bess for a moment.

By and by I took a long breath. "Is that what you want to do, Bess?" I asked, soberly.

Bess clasped her hands so tightly that there were little white spots where her fingers came. "Oh, if I only could, Chet!" she said, sort of choked.

"And you never said one word about it, when I told you all my plans, about being a civil engineer, and everything?"

"O Chet, I did n't really have any plans. I did n't even hope the least bit, — it looked too big for me to ever even think about except in the dark, and I don't hardly dare to talk about it now. Father says my work is very crude yet, but that it has something in it that is 'different'; and so he says that he has hopes that if I keep everlastingly at it, I may some time be able to do something worth while."

"But why can't you do it here, just as well?"

"Oh, he says it 's so easy to drop off anything like that, when one is always in the same surroundings; and he wants me to 'get the habit'; and the main thing, at first, is to have something that you just have to write about, to get it out of your system; and he thinks that if I 'm travelling and having experiences, and among strangers, so that I won't have any one to talk it out to, that I 'll put it on the type-writer to him in letters. But he said" — Bess laughed and rocked back and forth, "he said that if he caught me trying to 'write fine,' instead of in the natural way, as I 've been

doing, he 'd telegraph me to go home. He was afraid that talking it over might make me self-conscious, and spoil everything."

I sat still and whittled on the cleat. There did n't seem to be anything to say. I 'd planned so much for the Autumn — the things we'd do when Bess got home, — and now it was all up. Of course, I was glad for Bess, — I could see how much the trip was going to mean to her; but to think of all of those beautiful Autumn days that were coming, and no one to chum with, — that is, no one with whom I was in touch or who knew how I felt about things, or who would understand everything I said, without a lot of explanation; and when I 'd been alone all Summer — well, things looked mighty black, — so black, in fact, that I did n't want to talk about them; so I started something else.

"Bess," I said, "are you a Christian Scientist?"

Bess hesitated. "I — I don't know," she said, "whether I ought to say that I am, or not."

"Do you mean that you are n't quite sure that you believe it?"

"No! Oh, no, not that at all! I do believe it; because I can understand the things it teaches

and it 's all reasonable and plain to me as far as I 've gone and I can't help believing it, and I 've proved ever so much, just as you prove examples in arithmetic. But, you see, I have n't been studying it long, — have n't had time to grow much, under its influence, and I don't make a very good sample of what it can do. There are lots of things that I have n't grown out of yet, and I would n't want any one to say: — 'You need n't tell me that Christian Scientists are brave and kind and loving; for I know one and she 's afraid to go on the water, and she has " moods," and there are some things she has n't forgiven, and she 's afraid to eat chicken — ' You see, Chet, it would n't be fair to pick a Northern Spy in July and let it go on exhibition as a sample of what Northern Spies are. Of course, a person who knows about apples, might see that it was a perfectly good apple as far as it had gone; but a person who did n't know, might think that it was the best thing that the tree could turn out, and say that he did n't like the variety. I 've got to think it over for a while and see what 's the best thing to do to answer that question so that folks will know that I am a Christian Scientist at heart,

and am working it to the surface just as fast as ever I can. I'd like to get to where people would know that I am a Christian Scientist without ever asking a question, — just because I am *living* Christian Science!"

"Well, you certainly are honest," I said, "and I can see what you mean. A fellow would n't feel exactly like announcing himself an athlete, and naming his trainer, when he had taken only two days' training and had done a few laps in slow time with some tumbles; — but still he 'd want folks to know that he had the makings of one, and was working along the lines of the best trainer to be had."

Bess nodded. "That 's the idea," she said.

"Well," I said, "I don't believe you 'll have any trouble over it; for you 're square with yourself, you always are, and that means that you 'll be square and considerate about this; and if you 're square with yourself, you will know all right what to say when folks ask you; — and you 'll know when you are ready to just stand up and say: — 'Yes, I am a Christian Scientist.'"

"Yes," said Bess, soberly, "I believe I will."

"And," I went on, "you 've got sense enough

not to nag other people who don't think just as you do."

"I hope I have!" said Bess emphatically. "If any one asks me what I think of it, I 'll be mighty glad to tell them that I think it 's the very best thing that any one knows anything about, — and where he can go to find out what it teaches, — but I 'm not going around with a chip on my shoulder labelled 'Christian Science,' nor telling people, gratis, that I think they are making mistakes; but I'm going to mind my own business strictly; and if I mind it so well that I accomplish enough to make any one want to ask me what my recipe is, — well, that will be *something*."

"It sure will," I said.

Bess got up. "I have to go in now," she said, "and look after my packing."

I picked up the cleat again and began to whittle. That word "packing" made things get gloomy and my mouth taste bad. "Bess," I said, whittling hard, "what would you do if you felt the way I do about your going away?"

"Why, I 'd work on it," said Bess.

"'Work on it?'" I repeated. "Do you mean

you 'd say things to yourself? What would you say?"

"Say! Why, it is n't anything you *say*, Chet, it 's what you know,— what you understand,— what you study out and make yours."

"Well, I know I 'll be perfectly miserable and cross all the time you 're away. That 's where *I* stand, — and I don't have to study it out, either."

"And you want me to stay at home?"

"No, of course I don't want you to stay at home; — but you see there is n't any way around a thing like this, Science or no Science. In order for you to be happy, I 've got to be miserable; — so there is n't any use in 'working' as you call it, so far as I can see."

"You don't have to see," said Bess. "When you come to look at it squarely, the only thing that you really want is harmony — to feel that things are going right and not jolting you, and it looks to you as if there was n't any way of having it so; — but there always is a way, and we have to know — "

"But there *is n't* a way in this case," I persisted; "not even if you stayed at home; for if

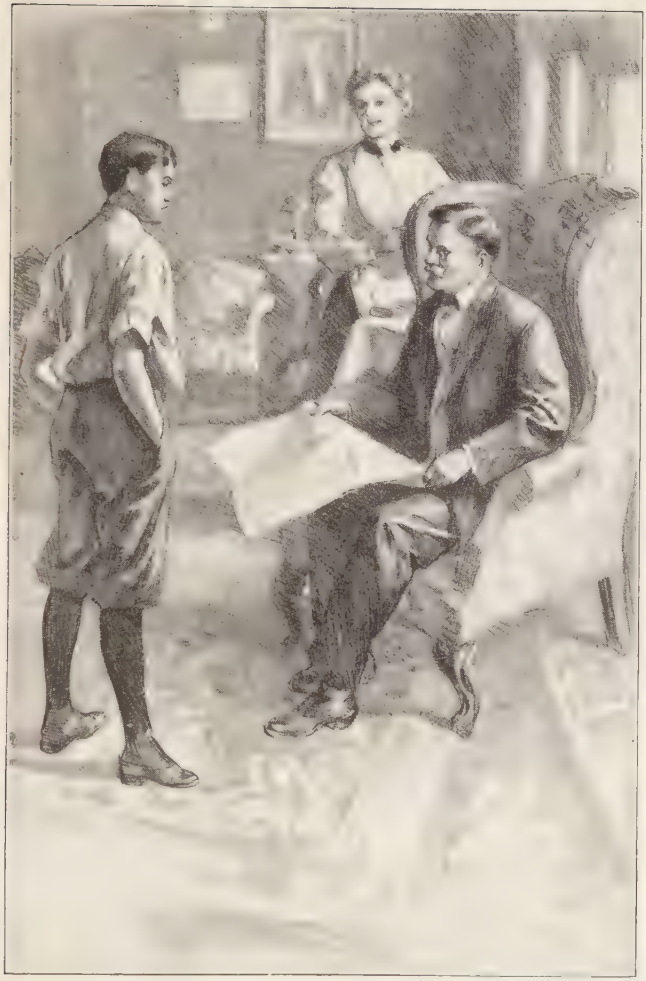
you did, you 'd be miserable, and so of course I would be too, and — "

Just then Bess's Father called her, and she had to run away, — and I did n't even get up when she went.

I sat there and kept on whittling for quite a while, until I got the cleat done, and then I climbed up and nailed it in place; and all the time I could feel that my jaws were set and my chin hard and that there was a deep wrinkle between my eyes, — and I knew that I had the making of about the ugliest streak I 'd ever had in my life. And so I went to work. I can always work when I have that sort of a streak; for I feel dogged and glum, and I keep right at a thing until I get it done, and it has to be done right, too. I did a lot of little odd jobs about the yard, and then went in to dinner.

I went in cross and sat down to the table with my lips pressed tight and my brows close together.

When Dad came in, he was in a fine humor. He had had a good morning at the store; — Mrs. Vickery had bought the piano she 'd been looking at for six months; and there were two weddings in sight, so there was a lot of silver and such stuff



"Leaves you pretty much alone, does n't it?"

going out, and it made him feel good. By and by he looked over at me.

"What you looking that way for, Chet?" he asked.

I did n't answer, and Mother shook her head at him — she knows my moods, — but he did n't pay any attention.

"What 's the matter?" he said again.

I knew I 'd got to answer some time, so I said, — "Bess is going away again."

"Where 's she going?" asked Dad.

"Chicago," I said.

"Leaves you pretty much alone, does n't it? Why don't you go along?"

I pressed my lips tighter. I did n't feel like being joked.

"Well," said Dad, "of course you don't *have* to; but I should think it would be a nice trip for you."

I gasped. "Are n't you fooling?" I asked.

"No," said Dad. "You 've been home all Summer, and helped in the store a good deal, and if Mr. Carter will take you along, I don't see why you should n't go for a week or so."

Gee! I just sat still and stared.

"Want to go?" asked Dad.

"You bet I do!" said I.

"All right, I'll speak to Mr. Carter as I go back to the store. He's home, is n't he?"

"Yes," I said, and then I suddenly thought of Bess and her "work," and at the same moment I felt a flash of suspicion.

"Dad," I said, "did you know Bess was going?"

"No," said Dad.

"Nor that Mr. Carter was?"

"No. Why?"

"And you had n't thought about me going, until just now?"

"Why, of course not; but I don't believe he 'll object; — he likes you." Dad got up from the table. "Want to come along?"

"Sure!"

Mr. Carter was on the veranda when we came across the lawn. "I hear you 're going to Chicago to-morrow night," said Dad.

"Yes," said Mr. Carter, "and I'm taking Bess along with me."

"Want another, for good measure?" said Dad, jerking his head toward me.

"Good work! Well, I should say I do!" Mr.

Carter came down three steps and shook hands with himself and looked at me. "Bess will be next thing to alone there for nearly a week, and she and Chet can have the time of their lives. Of course she 'll be at my sister's; but Mary 's getting the years into her joints and does n't go out much. There 'll be plenty of room for Chet there, too, and the youngsters can do the town any way they want to."

"All right," said Dad, "and much obliged. Chet, you go and tell your mother. Tell her she need n't pack much for you; for you can get a new suit in Chicago, — you need one anyway. You can take my suit-case and —" but I was on our veranda by that time, up over the railing, — and, gee, I 'd been in Chicago for six hours before my head stopped whirling!

CHAPTER V

BESS MEETS A NUMBER OF THINGS

I NEVER did see things come so fast as they did for a while there. Have you ever noticed how unevenly affairs run? Sometimes there will be a long, dull, smooth place in your life, the way that Summer had been for me; and then, beginning with the afternoon when I wakened up in the hammock and heard Dad talking about that other girl, things had just been humping themselves right along until it seemed as if the incidents would tumble over one another in their hurry to get into action. Nothing more had been said on the girl question, and I was trying to keep it out of my mind as much as possible. Well, it had been only two or three days since then, and here I was in Chicago, and everything humming! Actually, I felt as if I must be dozing in that hammock yet, and would wake up pretty soon and go out and fix the latch on the back gate.

Bess and I arrived in Chicago all by ourselves; for her father got a message just before he started, that made it necessary for him to go to Cleveland;

and so he left us on the way, and telegraphed to a friend of his to meet us at the station and start us in the right direction to get to his sister's. I call her "Aunt Fannie," the same as Bess does.

That friend of his certainly did know how to do things up right. He was at the train, sure enough, and he had the swellest automobile you ever saw, waiting just outside of the station, ready to take us over onto the North Side and drop us right where we belonged. I tell you, it was great stuff! You see, it was the first time I had ever been in an auto, and it went to my head some. I liked it all right; but I got so tired that my knees fairly knocked together. I sat on the front seat, and of course I braced my feet and kept pulling back all the time, to keep from running into things; and a big machine like that is a mighty heavy thing to hold back all by yourself. It was worst down in town, where the streets were crowded; but we did n't go so very fast there, so that helped some; — and when we went to cross the bridge and found it was turned to let a boat go through, I had to just pull back with all my might, to keep from going over the edge and into the river.

The chauffeur was nice, though; and by and

by he looked at me and laughed, and said that if I 'd lean back and take it easy, he guessed that he and the brake could manage the machine all right. And then I saw what a goose I 'd been making of myself, — and suddenly remembered what Uncle Rob had said about confidence making one normal. So I just relaxed the strain and let him run the machine, and by the time that we were spinning away north with the blue lake shining and sparkling at our right, and the beautiful houses and lawns flying past at our left, that involuntary tension was all gone, and I was doing nothing but *enjoy*.

I am so glad that the lake was rough on that first day that I saw it; for now I shall always think of it that way. The sun was shining and there was a fresh, cool breeze, and the lake was blue, and there were flashing, tossing white-caps just as far as you could see; and away out on the edge of the horizon, the line was all rough and uneven and wavering. And nearer shore, the great, smooth waves came rolling in, and as they came closer, they would rise up, and rise up, and their round tops would begin to get sharp and thin and then they would begin to curl over a little,

just a very little at first, with tiny, white flecks flying, and then all of a sudden they would break over, like a great waterfall, beginning in front of you and curling away off down the shore, as white as snow. And where the water ran up on the beach it was exactly like the galloping white horses that some one painted; and I could just see their flying manes, and bending knees, and reaching hoofs! And where there was no beach, only a sea-wall, the waves would come rolling up, big and round, and then, all of a sudden, there would be a deep, heavy boom, and the whole wave would dash up into the air and the top of it would break into feathers and plumes of white spray which the wind blew into our faces; and then the whole mass of it would drop back onto the stonework with another boom, and a swishing and splashing. It surely was fine! And sometimes a wave would strike the sea-wall sidewise and go spinning away down the shore, taking a great white curl of water for ever and ever so far, and ending with a wild throwing up of its arms and a tremendous leap, and then come tumbling and crashing down onto the stonework. Of course, I did n't see all of this in detail on that first ride, we were

going too fast for that; but I sort of sensed it all, and Bess and I took it in, to the full, afterward.

We were tired and dirty and hungry when we got to Aunt Fannie's, but we did n't realize it until we were in the house, for there had been so much to see that we had forgotten that we were made of anything but eyes. Aunt Fannie is all right. She is just fine and we did n't have to get acquainted at all; for we, someway, seemed to "belong," without going to the trouble of geting adjusted. Some people *are* that way, you know, and she is one of them. Another uncle of Bess's was there, and it was his first trip to Chicago, too; because Aunt Fannie has lived there for only about a year; and he was having as fine a time as we were, though he was supposed to be there on business. He is n't much like Uncle Rob, and yet he reminds me of him sometimes. He 's awfully decided, too, even before he is sure about things; but if he has to back down afterward, he always does it with a grin; and never makes any kick because he was mistaken, as most people do. I never before saw a person who could be so absolutely certain about a thing which was n't so, and then be so

cheerful about it when he found that he 'd guessed wrong.

Aunt Fannie told us not to spend much time primping for dinner, as she was having it early because she knew we would be hungry; so we hurried down, and when the gong sounded, we were not at all slow about getting into the dining-room.

The table looked mighty good to me. It was a small, round one, and just as dainty as could be. Uncle Fred took the head, to serve, and Aunt Fannie poured the coffee; Bess sat at the right, and was to look after the salad and I was opposite, with a big dish of green corn in front of me, which I was told to engineer.

Uncle Fred sniffed as he raised the cover from the great platter in front of him. "Smells like old times," he said.

I gave one look, and then my eyes turned toward Bess. She was talking to Aunt Fannie; but I knew she 'd seen, by the way she kept her face turned away from me. That platter was plum full of a great big chicken pot-pie! Fine, plump dumplings, tender, white chicken, and the whole just fairly swimming in rich, thick gravy.

I kept on looking at Bess, and she kept on talking to Aunt Fannie, but I looked so hard that finally she had to turn her eyes, and when she saw my face, the corners of her mouth went up and she stopped in the middle of a sentence.

"What 's the matter, Chet?" she asked, coolly. "You look as if you had left something at home, and had just thought of it."

I saw that she was going to make some sort of a bluff, and so I said no, that I was just wondering what she was going to do when she got ready to eat, because she could n't eat and talk at the same time. I *had* to say *something*.

Uncle Fred was getting things well under way. He had put two big dumplings on her plate, and now he turned to her: — "Light or dark meat, Bess?" he asked.

"Light meat, please," said Bess, cheerfully; and so he put on a fine piece of the breast, and then a big spoonful of mashed potatoes, and then I saw her last hope go down, drowned in a great sousing of rich gravy over the whole thing!

I looked away. I knew that I should have to either laugh or choke, — and I was sorry, too. She certainly was up against it! The table was

too small, and we were all sitting too close together for her to have the least chance of making that great plateful look even partly eaten unless it really was. Of course I knew that she 'd a lot rather make her dinner off of bread and butter and corn than take a mouthful of the chicken,—but I also knew that she 'd rather go to bed for a week than have Aunt Fannie know that the dinner which she had planned as just the thing for us hungry kids, was a dead failure as far as Bess was concerned. I knew that it was n't notion with Bess, either; for I 've seen her when she had what she used to call a "chicken sick," that she had got from eating soup that had just a little chicken in it when she did n't know it, and once when she ate some fried chicken over at our house because I dared her to. But that was before she took up Christian Science.

When everybody was served, and it was time to start in, I looked at Bess again. She took up her knife and fork, put up her head for an instant and looked me square in the eye, and then she fell too and — ate chicken!

Gee, but that girl has grit!

She did n't ask for a second helping, but she

ate a good, hearty dinner, and chatted away all through it, as if she were having the best time ever.

"Now," said Uncle Fred, when we had finished everything else and were still sitting around the table eating nuts and raisins; "I have some news for you. I saved it so as not to interfere with your appetites. Day after to-morrow the whole bunch of us, and some more, are going over to Michigan City on the boat."

I took one look at Bess and then I clapped both hands over my mouth.

"Did you bite on a shell?" asked Aunt Fannie, sympathetically.

"I — you — you can't always tell when there's shells in them," I mumbled. I did n't dare to take my hands down; for the expression on Bess's face had n't got back to normal yet, and she looked as if she had got beyond her depth and there was n't a straw in sight.

In just a second I had the corners of my mouth under control. "Put down your feet and walk out, Bess," I said. "The water is n't really deep — you can touch bottom all right if you quit struggling."

"What 's that?" asked Aunt Fannie, looking from one to the other of us.

"Oh," I said, "Bess has been on the crest of the wave ever since she left home; because so many unexpected things have turned up, and I was afraid she 'd 'turn turtle' in the breakers, at this last piece of good news, if I did n't warn her to keep her feet on the ground."

"You need n't worry," said Bess, beginning to look natural again; "I guess I can keep my equilibrium all right — and there 's something better than sand under my feet, too."

Uncle Fred laughed. "I guess Bess won't lose her head and go under, for joy over a little trip like that," he said. And I knew that Bess agreed with him clear down to the bottom of her heart.

Later in the evening, when Bess and I were looking over some unmounted photographs of Uncle Fred's, I said, very low, — "Bess, how are you feeling?"

"Fine," said Bess, looking square at me.

"Don't you feel sick at all?"

"Nope."

"Well, if you 're sick in the night, what are you going to do?"

"Well, I 'm not counting upon being sick in the night," said Bess, "and you 'll oblige me by not counting upon it, either. Let 's talk about the weather."

That was always her way of turning the conversation.

"All right," I said. "I hope we 'll have a fine day to cross the lake! Chicken and the briny deep in one mouthful! — I guess that 's going some, is n't it?"

Bess put up her chin. "Chet" she said, "things are coming my way. Those were the two highest stone walls that I had before me to climb, and I was waiting to come to them; — but instead, they have just walked right up to me, and said: —'It 's up to you now, what are you going to do about us?' All the time, I have thought that I was going to have to climb over them; but all of a sudden I see that I have only to walk through them; — for they 're not stone, they 're only — only fog. I used to think that they were protecting me from pain and danger; but they were really only shutting me away from freedom. I never realized it until I got so close to them.

Don't you worry about me — I 'm coming through all right."

"H'm!" I said, "I thought you were up against it, and here you are out in the open, after all. You 're all right, Bess, — you 'll win, — I could n't carry it off better myself." Then suddenly I happened to think. "Bess," I said, "there 's another stone wall that you and I are coming up to by and by, and you want to look out that it does n't fall on you."

"What one?"

"That other girl."

Bess wrinkled her brows. "I 'd almost forgotten," she said; "and that is the very biggest one of all, because it is going to last all the time. Oh, dear, I wish that one would vanish into thin air too."

"Not much, it won't," I said. "That 's a sure-enough hurdle, and there 's going to be no walking through it or seeing freedom on the other side. I wish you 'd make up your mind what you 're going to do about it."

Bess pressed her lips together. "I told you what I was going to do about it," she said.

"What?"

"Love her."

"Good-night," I said, and got up to go to my room.

The next forenoon Bess and I started out to see the sights. She had come down to breakfast looking as fresh as could be; and when I asked her how she felt, she said that she did n't waken up once all night. I certainly was surprised, — and yet I had just about half expected it; for she was so confident that I sort of caught it, and would have been disappointed if she had been worsted. I got into such an odd state of mind about her affairs, for I kind of expected both ways, when she met one of her stone walls; and if I had been talking to any one about it, I would have said: — "It 's exactly what I expected; — but I 'm surprised, just the same," and I began taking about as much interest as if I had been in it myself.

Well, that day we went to the Art Institute, and some of the stores, and wound up at the Museum and stayed there until the doors closed. I think we 'd have stayed until morning if they 'd have let us. I never saw so many things that were downright interesting, in all my life put together.

Bess and I had read about so many of the things, that it was just like meeting old friends, and I tell you, we simply revelled. Bess got acquainted with some girls who were in the Egyptian room when we went in, and they were real jolly. One of them was quite clever, and she and Bess struck up a friendship right off. The other one was pretty, and about fourteen years old, but she was n't paying much attention to things — did n't seem to know how.

By and by we all stopped in front of a glass case where there was a mummy, and there was a printed label telling all about it. Bess read it aloud, and when she got through, the pretty girl turned to the other one and said, — "What is it, Grace?"

"Why, it 's a mummy. Did n't you hear what she read?"

The rest of us walked on, but the girl stood still, looking into the case. In a moment she came running after us. "Grace," she said, "what did you say that thing is?"

"A mummy. An Egyptian mummy. Go read the label."

The girl went back and bent over the label

and then she stood, again, staring into the glass case. The cover of the mummy-case had been removed, and one could see the winding strips of brown cloth, frayed and torn in places. She stood for so long that we grew tired of waiting, and the other girl called to her; but she did n't turn around. "Well, what do you think of that?" said her friend. "I did n't suppose Belle had enough imagination to stand dreaming over a mummy-case in that sort of a way! We 'll have to go back after her."

I knew that it was n't imagination; for no girl with a genuinely empty face ever spends any time dreaming; but I did n't say anything, and we walked back.

As we came up to her, she turned, and her face was all knotted up with perplexity. "Grace," she exclaimed, "What did you say this thing is?"

Grace started to speak, and then stopped and looked helplessly at Bess and me. "Why, Belle," she said at last, "we 've told you three times that it is a mummy -- an Egyptian mummy -- the mummy of an Egyptian princess! Can't you understand that?"

Belle brought her hand down on the case,

with one finger pointed, so hard that you 'd have thought it would have gone clear through the glass. "Yes, yes, yes!" she exclaimed, pounding on the glass with her finger; "of course I understand that perfectly; but what I 'm trying to find out is — *what on earth did she use it for*?"

Bess and I went home then.

CHAPTER VI

OVER THE WATER WITH TWINNY

THERE was not a very large party of us to go to Michigan City, — just Aunt Fannie and Uncle Fred and a Mrs. Walker, an old friend of theirs who used to live in the same town, and had twin daughters about twelve years old, — and they went along. They were mighty nice little girls, and looked so much alike that no one ever tried to tell which was Marian and which Margaret; but just said "Twinny," and that meant either, and either one answered. I asked one of them how she knew whether a person was speaking to her or her sister, and she said, — "Why, I don't, — but it does n't make any difference, does it?" I said I supposed not; but I heard the other one — I think it must have been the other one — say to Bess a while afterward, —

"Is n't it lovely to think that you are just yourself, and nobody else is you, and you are not anybody else?"

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Bess.

"I mean, I should think you 'd be so sort of

proud to be just yourself, all alone, and nobody like you, anywhere. Now with me it 's different — there 's always two of me, and that makes me so common."

Bess laughed at first, and then she looked a little sober, when she saw that Twinny's face was really wistful. "Why, childie," she said, "could two great, sweet American Beauty roses ever be common?"

"No," said Twinny, her face brightening.

"And if they were both just as sweet as they could possibly be, would n't it be nicer to have two than one?"

"Yes," said Twinny, the smiles beginning to come.

"Well, then, don't you worry," said Bess, "just be sweet."

It was nine o'clock when we reached the dock and the day was warm and sunny and the sky blue with little fluffy white clouds floating southward, and every once in a while a little whiff of wind from up the lake would put a white cap on a blue wave. The boat was n't very large; but it was not at all crowded, and so we all went back to the stern and fixed our chairs so that we could

watch the white wake and the long, uneven line of the city roofs, with its towering buildings wrapped in a veil of smoke that thinned and died away to the north and south, leaving the stretch of the park and beautiful homes standing out in the clear sunlight. We watched and chatted, and the twins certainly were fun. I liked one of them a good deal the better, but I could never tell which one it was; for whenever they 'd get mixed up, I 'd have to go to talking to the one that came handiest until I'd found out whether she was the one or not; and then when they 'd get up and walk around, I 'd get off of the track again. It was interesting, though, and I got to wagering my right pocket against my left pocket, as to whether I had the interesting one or not, until I got all of my loose change and keys and everything else over onto one side, and Bess wanted to know whether I was trying to show off my wealth, that I was rattling it around so much; — and the side I had 'em on, was the side where I put 'em when I missed my guess. They told a lot of funny stories about each other. Once one of them had to stay out of school for a while, and when she was ready to start in again, she

could n't find her new shoes; and at last she discovered that the other had been wearing them every other day, so as to keep 'em even, so that they could keep on getting new shoes at the same time.

And sometimes they had to answer the doorbell when the maid was away, and by and by one of them found out that when her sister answered the bell, if she had on her good clothes, she said that she was herself, but if she was the least bit untidy, she said that she was her sister; and so the sister got the reputation of being always untidy, and the other of being always nice and trim

Her sister got even with her, though, by telling all the girls in school that she was the one that she was n't, and that she was going to wear a little green bow on her sleeve, so that they could know her from the other; and then she wore her oldest clothes, and soiled her face and hands and missed her lessons and roughed her hair all up for a week, before the other one found out what she was doing.

They never got angry at each other, though, - they did n't seem to know how to. I think it must have been because they felt so much like one person.

By and by one of them said to Bess: "Mamma says you are a Christian Scientist. Are you?"

"I 'm trying to be one," said Bess, carefully.

"Is Chester one?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because he does n't understand it," said Bess. I started to say something about that reply, and then I decided to think about it a little first. I think now, that it was a mighty good answer, — a mighty good one.

"Then why does n't he learn it, the way we learn lessons?"

Bess shook her head. "It 's odd," she said. "Folks are willing to study all sorts of other things, like arithmetic, and music, and how to be doctors and lawyers, and house-builders, they spend years and years at it; but they don't seem to think it 's worth while to study how to do the wonderful things that Jesus did. They seem to think that if it is possible to do these very greatest things in the world, they ought to be able to do them without studying or practising at all, — and because they can't, they don't seem to like it because other people do. I don't see why; when

Jesus said that we could do them all, — and 'greater things,' — and he was the most truthful person who ever lived."

Mrs. Walker had had one ear turned in our direction, and just then she leaned forward. "Don't you think, dear," she said, "that when Jesus said 'Heal the sick,' he meant the sick at heart?"

Bess's eyes opened wide. "Why, no!" she said, very earnestly. "*He* healed their bodies and their hearts, too, and told us to do just the same."

Mrs. Walker looked at her curiously, and then turned back to Aunt Fannie. "It's all Greek to me," she said, sighing and shaking her head; — "but I wish that I could understand it; for they are always such happy people."

"Let's go out in the bow and see if the sand dunes are in sight," called one of the twins. "You can see them for ever so far, and Chicago is almost gone now."

We all raced forward and crowded up around the flag-staff; and sure enough, away off in the distance, there were little dark streaks and patches beginning to show, quite a way above what looked like the sky line."

"There they are! There they are!" cried both of the twins together.

"Those dark spots are the trees and bushes on the tops of the dunes," explained one of the twins. "We don't get out of sight of land at all, on a clear day. When Chicago has dropped away from behind us, we can just begin to see Indiana."

"Indiana?" said Bess. "Why, I thought it was Michigan City that we were going to!"

"So it is," said Twinny—I don't know which one!—"but Michigan City is in Indiana. Did n't you know that?"

"No. Then why do they call it Michigan City?"

"Well," said Twinny, "it used to be in Michigan, so they say. Michigan used to stretch clear around the lake to Illinois, and Indiana did n't have any shore line at all; and that did n't seem fair, when Michigan has lake pretty nearly all around her; and so they made some sort of a bargain and let Indiana have that little corner. Michigan City was on a part of the land that Indiana took and so she had to change her last name."

We all laughed. "Just like getting married," said Bess.

"Is that really true?" I asked.

"I don't know," said Twinny. "The captain told me when I was coming over last year; — but you can never tell whether they are stuffing you or not."

"Why, Twinny Walker!" exclaimed the other twin. "Mamma does n't allow you to use slang."

"Well, what would you say instead of 'stuffing,' I 'd like to know?"

"Why — why —" the other twin could n't think of a word. "Well," she said at last, "I think 'filling' is a good deal nicer word — "

We all laughed again. "All right," said Twinny, "have it any way you choose. Chester, the captain was 'filling' me!"

The other twin flushed. "No," she said, "that does n't sound right, either. Bess, what should it be?"

"Well," said Bess, "I think it would be nicer to believe that he was telling the truth."

Twinny gave her a little hug. "I have n't heard you say a thing that was horrid since we started," she said. "How can you always say nice things about people when you don't even know them?"

"By thinking nice things instead of unpleasant ones," said Bess; "but I don't do it nearly as much as I ought to, — I 'm only trying to get the habit."

"You never catch me getting that kind of habit," I said. "I always get the kind that have to be broken, smashed - - until the word 'habit' always seems to mean something bad, that I have got to get rid of, - or ought to get rid of, at least."

"That 's so," said Twinny, and then the other part of her interrupted.

"Oh, see how much bigger the waves are! Don't they look pretty and white on top? And look how plainly you can see the sand dunes now."

"Where 's the city?" asked Bess. "I don't see anything but yellow hills all along the shore. There is n't a single break."

"Oh, yes there is," said Twinny. "When we get a little nearer you will see a wider space between two of the dunes, and that 's where the river comes through, and then you can see some of the spires and buildings. The town is all behind the dunes."

Bess had turned away from the water and was looking rather anxiously toward the stern.

"Had n't we better go back to Aunt Fannie?" she asked, uneasily.

"Getting hungry?" I asked. "Well, it won't do you any good for we are n't to have luncheon until we get onto the beach; so you can just make up your mind to that, my young lady." I was hungry myself, and was sort of glad to relieve my mind that way.

"No," said Bess, soberly, "I just thought that maybe we would better go back where they are, before it 's time to land."

"Oh, we won't be in for nearly an hour," said Twinny.

Bess took a few steps. "I think I 'll go, anyway," she said.

"You 're hungry, you 're hungry!" I called. "You 're going to ask Aunt Fanny for a sandwich."

Bess turned on me wrathfully; "I 'm not either!" she cried hotly, "I 'm not hungry, any such thing! I never want to see anything to eat again as long as I live!"

My jaw dropped and then suddenly I knew what was the matter, and I just toppled down onto a coil of rope and rolled over with my head in

the middle of it, and laughed until I ached. I wonder why it is so awfully funny to see some other person seasick!

Bess did n't even try to laugh, — or, maybe she did try but it did n't show any on the surface, and as soon as I could get my breath, I was sorry I had laughed, and I got up and made her sit down on the rope. Then I took Twinny, both of her, and trotted them into the cabin and told them stories, so that Bess could have it out with herself. They wanted to send Aunt Fannie to her; but I told them to let her alone and she would be all right when she 'd had time to think it over.

After a while I took them back to their mother, and then I went out to the bow again, and there was Bess, still on the coil of rope, and when I bent over her, I found that she was sound asleep, and she did n't waken up until we had turned to go into the harbor, and then I went and called her.

The boat was still rolling a good deal, but she sat up, as fresh and chipper as could be.

"Snoozer!" I said.

"Whoo!" she said, stretching her arms; "why,

I feel like Rip Van Winkle. I never slept so hard in my life. Are we nearly there?"

"Just going into the river," I said, "and it's so crooked that the boat has to tie knots in herself to get through."

Bess jumped up. "Oh," she cried, "there's the life-saving station! See the look-out man on top!"

"That job looks good to me," I said. "Nothing to do but walk up and down there and watch for wrecks; and then, when you see one — Whee-ee-ee!" — and I went through all the motions of running out boats and managing oars and throwing life-preservers. I wanted to be right in the middle of a big storm and see what I'd do, and whether I'd keep my nerve. Just then we bumped into the piling; for that little river is so crooked that the boat had to run her nose right up onto the bank and then throw out a rope to hold her there, and swing around and go up to the dock backward. Gee, you ought to have seen her strain on that rope! They say that a lot of money has been spent on that harbor; but it's the most skewgee one that *I* ever saw.

Bess and I hurried back to where the others were gathering up wraps and lunch-boxes. Twin-

ny had n't said a word about Bess, except that she had gone to sleep, and so she did n't get teased at all.

As soon as the landing was made, we kids raced off ahead of the others, up the slope to the street, across the bridge, through the little park, and away out onto the hard sand of the east beach.

And such a beach! It was white and smooth for miles and miles — as far as one could see — hard and firm near the water, loose and fine farther back; and then piled up in great soft dunes eighty or a hundred feet high, with trees and bushes on the tops of some of them, and others just smooth and round, and you could see the heads of oaks and maples that were growing on the landward slope, away from the wind, and only peeping over the top. Hoosier Slide is on the other side of the river, and that is a perfect mountain of sand, and almost straight up and down. Twinny said that they climbed it the Summer before, and it was so steep and so soft that they thought they never would get to the top, and it was a blazing hot day, too; but they *would* go up, because they wanted to see the view from

there; and then when they got up, at last — here Twinny looked at each other and laughed.

"What 's the matter?" I asked. "Was n't the view worth it?"

"We don't know," said Twinny; "we never looked to see. After we 'd gone and worn ourselves to a frazzle climbing up through all that loose sand, we found that if we had just gone around the base of the hill a little way, we could have walked right up an easy slope; and it made us so mad to think of all the bother we 'd had, that we just turned around and went right back down without even looking at the view!"

Bess and I laughed. "Is n't that just the way?" said Bess. "We struggle and struggle to get something; and then we spend so much time thinking about how hard it was to get, that we entirely lose sight of the thing itself, and don't get any good out of it."

"Here 's the place," called Twinny, who had run a little way ahead. "This is where we ate last year."

"Why, how can you tell?" asked Bess, looking around; "It 's just the same everywhere — only smooth sand."

"How can I tell? Why, by my footprints, of course," said Twinny, whirling around on her heel and making a funny, circular mound with a hole in the centre. "I always walk like that, you know, and then I can always tell where I've been," and she made another, a little farther on.

I sat her down on it. "Explain," I said, holding her there by the shoulders, and wondering which one she was.

"Oh, I'll tell you, I'll tell you, only let me get up," she cried. "Do you see that big heap of sand over there? Well, that covers an old rowboat that was washed up here on the beach a long time ago. When the lake is rough, the driftwood gets caught in a little hollow behind it; and so, when we want to build a fire, it is nicer to do it here, where the wood is handy, instead of having to go over the dunes for it. Now let me get up, Chester; — we've got to hurry and get the wood, for I'm starving!"

"All right," said I. "You hungry, Bess?"

"I surely am," said Bess. "What are we going to cook?"

"Just eggs, and toast some marsh-mallows; we brought two boxes of them. Chester, you'll

have to whittle some skewers. Twinny was going to; but when we found there was going to be a boy along, we thought we would give him the job."

We gathered the wood and then, while Aunt Fannie and Mrs. Walker were getting things in shape, we sat down on the sand-covered boat and I whittled skewers.

"I never in my life saw anything so beautiful as that lake," said Bess, leaning back in the soft sand. "Is n't it the bluest blue and the whitest white that you ever saw? Just look, where it dashes up against the breakwater!"

I looked. "Gee, those are big waves!" I said. "They 're getting bigger all the time. It looks just like a storm, only the sun is shining so brightly, and the only clouds are those little soft, white ones. I 'll bet she 'll be rough going back!"

"No, it won't," said Twinny. "The captain told Mamma that we would be going toward the wind and the boat would n't roll nearly so much. Don't you mind what he says, Bess."

Bess laughed. "I don't mind," she said, "I 'm not afraid, and I have n't any idea of being sick, no matter how rough it is."

Twinny looked at her. "How did you do it?" she asked, wonderingly.

"Just by understanding why I need n't be sick," said Bess.

"But when the way you feel keeps telling you something different, how can you?"

"Well," said Bess, "supposing you were doing an example in arithmetic, and some one kept whispering in your ear: — 'Five and five are eleven, five and five are eleven,' you 'd know it was n't true; and though it might bother and confuse you some, it would n't make you miss your example, would it, unless you stopped and listened to it and let it mix you up?"

Twinny thought a minute. "No," she said at last; "not if I kept on 'tending to business." And then; — "But what do you do when you *see* sickness and such things? I always have to believe what I see, and what other people around me see and believe."

Bess took one of the skewers and wrote on the smooth sand: "5 + 5 = 11."

"There," she said, "Can you see that?"

"Yes."

"Well, do you believe it?"

"No, of course I don't."

"Now suppose a lot of people should come along and see it and say: — 'Yes, that 's true, five and five are eleven,' what would you think then?"

Twinny studied again. "Well," she said, "I suppose I 'd be sort of worried at first; and then I 'd see that I 'd got to prove it, and I 'd hold up my fingers and count, just like a little young one, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten; — and then I'd know I was n't mistaken, and it would n't make any difference what any one said."

"And the figures you could see would n't make any difference?" and Bess pointed to the "5 + 5 = 11," printed on the sand.

Twinny whipped a little switch across them, blotting them out. "They would n't matter *that* to me," she said; "because I 'd know better!"

"Then, do you see what I mean about understanding the truth about a thing?"

"Yes," said Twinny. "Then of course the first thing is to find out what the truth is. Is that it?"

"Yes," said Bess, "first find out what the

truth is and why, — and then prove it every chance you get."

"And do you have to study very hard?"

"You have to study some — and think, more. It is n't yours until you 've thought it out, no matter how much you read and commit to memory. You don't *know* a thing simply because some one has told it to you, — you know it because you 've thought about it, and understand it, and proved it. If you knew 'five and five are ten,' only because some one had *told* you, then, when some one else said differently, you 'd think that you might be mistaken, and you 'd get muddled and worried, and maybe miss your example; — but when you can count, and understand, then you know exactly where you are, and nothing can budge you."

Twinny looked at her, with her eyes big. "It must have been very wonderful for the person who found out the truth," she said, softly. "Just think of finding out a marvellous thing like that, and then proving it, and then telling people, and telling them how to prove it for themselves, — and seeing them get better and happier because of it, and and — oh, would n't it be just glorious!"

"Yes," said Bess, soberly, "it must be glorious! All of the work, and the study and the pain, must be swallowed up in the glory of it!"

Twinny sat with her chin in the hollow of her hand. "And to think," she went on, "of the thousands and thousands of people who are thinking 'thank you' all the time, — thinking it with their whole hearts, not just saying it, — because they 've learned how to be good and happy and well!"

Bess looked at her in surprise. "I did n't know that you knew so much about it," she said.

"I don't know much," said Twinny, shaking her head; "but I 'm going to know more. I 've been watching the Christian Scientists that I 've met, and asking questions, until I 'm satisfied with the outside and — "

"And now you 're going after the inside, are you?" I asked.

"I am," said Twinny, very earnestly, and then she laughed. "There 's two of me to manage, though," she said, "and there 's likely to be some squabbles."

"Ho," said Bess, "there 's two of all of us when we begin, and we squabble dreadfully; — but the

'best man' always wins. You 've got an extra one on your side, and so you ought to make double-quick time."

Just then Aunt Fannie called to us that luncheon was ready, and we made a wild rush for the spread.

After we 'd toasted and eaten the last marshmallow, I dared the girls to climb to the top of the nearest sand dune. It was desperately steep, but it looked easy because the sand was so soft and fine; but, gee! that was just what made it hard, and we had to set out feet sidewise to get any foothold at all; and sometimes we 'd go in almost to our knees.

"Oh, dear," cried Twinny, "I 've got a peck of sand in each shoe and I can't feel my feet at all - - and they 're so heavy I can scarcely lift them. Chester, give me your hand."

So I went back and yanked them to the top, one at a time, and the only way I could do it, was by making them run a few steps and then drop in the sand, so as not to slide back, and then get up and run again. At last we were up, and stood there in the big wind, with the girls' hair and dresses

flapping wildly, and the gulls swooping all about our heads.

"Oh, is n't it splendid!" cried Bess, waving her arms. "I always feel like singing and shouting when I 'm out in the wind. I could almost fly! Is n't the lake perfectly grand? I never saw such great waves."

"Whoop!" I shouted, "Let 's go down and wade! It 'll be dandy fun. Come on. I 'm going to see how far I can jump."

"Don't, Chester," called Twinny, "It 's too steep!" but I had already given a flying leap and landed ever so far below, in the soft, loose sand.

"Come on," cried Bess, "I 'm not afraid," and the three of them came hopping and fluttering down the hill, for all the world like big grasshoppers.

I was about thirty feet from the bottom, when I suddenly had an idea. "I 'm going to turn a somersault," and I bent over, with my head down the hill. "Here goes," I called, and keeled over. I did the somersault; but I did n't stop there — I kept right on! The turn was so quick that I did n't have time to straighten out, and another

somersault followed, and then another faster one, — and then another —

"Chester, Chester," shouted the girls, "Stop, stop!" but they might just as well have shouted 'stop' to a rubber ball; for I was gathering momentum with every turn, and careening down that steep incline, all rolled up like a caterpillar, and enveloped in a cloud of sand and dust.

Exactly how many somersaults I turned, I 'll never know; but it seemed as if the revolutions were at the rate of about five thousand to the second, and that I kept on going for a year or two.

When I reached the foot of the hill and a few rods more, I just unfolded and lay still. I did n't unfold myself, I just came unfolded, and I lay still because nothing else would, and I did n't seem to have energy enough to get up and try to stand on a beach that was walking off on its lower edge and swinging around to hit at me every once in a while.

The girls came chasing down the hill in reckless leaps, and by the time they reached me I had managed to sit up and was holding my head with both hands.

"Oh, Chester," cried Twinny, "what did you

"I had managed to sit up and was holding my head in both hands"

keep on turning for? You frightened us dreadfully."

I blinked and tried to brush the sand out of my hair. "Wha what did I keep on turning for?" I said. "Well, what do you s'pose? Do you think I was playing foot-ball with myself like that, on purpose?"

"Could n't you stop?" asked Bess.

"Stop nothing! Could you stop if you were a full-grown comet, or an avalanche, or any of those things?"

"But why did n't you straighten out?"

"Straighten out? How much time did I have to straighten out? You did n't notice me stopping at any way-stations, did you? Besides, how could I tell when I was right side up? S'pose I 'd straightened out at the wrong time — I 'd have come standing on my head — and then where would I have landed? Gee, but things are spinning!"

Just then Aunt Fannie came up, a good deal out of breath. "Chester," she said, "don't you do that again."

My jaw dropped. "Don't do it again! Well, say, Aunt Fannie, if you can *make* me do it again,

you 're a bigger woman than I take you for"; and I squared off and looked fierce. "I 'll have you all know that I 'm no educated caterpillar, and you don't get any more free performances out of me. Come on, I 'm going wading, and if you girls see me duck my head again to-day, for goodness' sake, grab me; for I don't want to get started on any more trips like that."

We had a lot of fun in the water, and then wound up with a game of tag on the beach; and just as we were going to get on our shoes and stockings, Twinny came out from the hollow where the drift-wood was, with a big tumble-weed, left over from last year. It was a great globe of stiff stems and twigs, as light as a sponge and nearly as large as a bushel basket. I 'd never seen one before, and I took it to examine it, when suddenly a gust of wind snatched it out of my hand and tossed it away up in the air, like a balloon; and when it came down it did n't lie still, but started off down the beach at a perfectly astonishing gait. I saw right off why they called it a "tumble-weed."

We started after it, but we might as well have chased a running horse, for we were n't in it at all. The thing hurtled along the smooth sand,

every once in a while taking great leaps and bounds, exactly like a giant foot-ball being kicked by invisible players. It made diagonally across the beach, and straight for the foot of one of the largest sand dunes. We chased along, thinking we 'd get it at the foot of the hill; but not on your life!—it was n't stopping there. It just kept right on up the smooth, steep side of that hill, driven by the wind, and looking like nothing but a blurred, whirling mass of gray.

"Oh, Chester, Chester," shrieked Twinny, jumping up and down, "do see, that 's just exactly the way you looked, only you were coming down instead of going up! Oh, I wonder if it wants to stop!"

"Well, it sure won't do it any good to want to," I said; "any more than it did me. There, it 's almost at the top. Whoo! did you see her jump?" for when the gray ball reached the top of the dune, it gave a wild leap into the air, over the summit, and then down, out of sight on the other side.

"Let 's get some more," I said, "and race 'em. That one went at least a quarter of a mile. The wind is in exactly the right direction to give 'em

a long stretch, and then take 'em over the hill. The one that 's over the hill first, wins."

We found four more; but Twinny would n't take but one. They said they would n't race against each other, but would both have a hand in starting their one. I thought it was rather a nice idea. We had fun naming them. I called mine "Hoosier Boy," and Twinny's was "Skedaddle," and Bess called hers "Get There."

We all stood in a row and held the bushes high above our heads. Bess's had a piece of the stem, about four inches long, still on it, and I offered to cut it off; but she said to leave it, because it was so easy to hold it by while we waited for the right sort of a breeze. Pretty soon the breeze came, and I counted three, and Twinny screamed "They 're off!" and away they went, high in the air, and then spinning along over the sand before the wind.

But no sooner had Get There struck the ground, than I let out a yell. "Oh, look at him — look at old Hop-and-go-fetch-it!" I shouted, "Look at him, look at him!" for the stem had proved his downfall, and instead of spinning along like the others, the sharp end of it would strike the ground

at every turn, and the clumsy ball would rise upon it, make a funny leap into the air, and then roll over and come up again; giving it the most ridiculous, limping gait that you ever saw, and leaving him ever so far behind the others.

"He's gone lame, — he's gone lame!" I shouted. "He's got the string-halt!"

Bess laughed and cheered with the rest of us. "Oh, isn't he funny?" she cried. "Look at him jump! But, oh, see Skedaddle, he's ahead of Hoosier Boy! Chet, they're going to beat you!"

Hop-and-go-fetch-it, as I had christened Bess's racer, was a dozen feet behind the other two; and those two started up the hill almost side by side. Half way up they were neck and neck, and we were holding our breath with excitement, when suddenly, something happened — the lame fellow in the rear had reached the foot of the hill, and in one of his upward wabbles, a great gust of wind caught him, and he came racing wildly up the dune, in a series of perfectly tremendous leaps and bounds, scarcely seeming to touch the ground at all.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" cried Twinny, jumping

up and down, as usual, "Hurry, Skedaddle, oh, do hurry up!"

But it did n't do any good, for Skedaddle and the Hoosier were spinning along at the same old gait, neck and neck, and Hop-and-go-fetch-it was gaining on them at every jump; - still, they were pretty close to the top, and might make it, yet. Just as they were almost at the brow of the hill, still close together, and the lame one about five feet behind, — Whoosh — there came a sudden gust of wind, and he rose high in the air, over the heads of the other two, gave a comical twist as if kicking up his heels, as he cleared the summit, and disappeared upon the other side, just as the others reached the top.

I jumped up and down with the others, and cheered. "Hurrah for old Hop-and-go-fetch-it! He won by three lengths, and he had only one leg, and was lame in that! The Hoosier and Skedaddle were n't a circumstance to him. Whoop!"

"Well," said Twinny, "I 'm glad he won; because he had such a handicap, and it was fine for him to come out ahead in spite of it. Come on, Chester, we tied for second place, we ought to try again."

I was willing enough; but just then Aunt Fannie called that it was time for us to put on our shoes and get ready for the boat, which was to start at four o'clock; and so we had to let it go.

As we walked to the boat, we met Uncle Fred coming back from town with some paper bags that made us forget that we had ever seen a sandwich or a marsh-mallow. We did n't know what was in 'em, but they looked as if the trip home were going to have "some rather pleasant elements," as Bess said, very primly.

It did!

CHAPTER VII

LAKE MICHIGAN ENTERTAINS

WE went aboard the boat early, so as to get good seats, and we fixed up a cozy little corner in the stern, all by ourselves. Some of us had camp chairs and some, big splint-bottomed chairs with arms; and as soon as we were settled, Uncle Fred opened the paper bags, and there were oranges and bananas and some great big dark red plums which were red all the way through to the seed, — the first ones like that that I had ever seen, — and they certainly were fine.

We had made a pretty good start on the fruit when the boat moved out into the river. "Well, for goodness' sake!" said Twinny, "Look at the crowd down there by the life-saving station! Do you suppose they all came down just to see the boat go out? You 'd think they never saw a steam-boat before!"

"They 're a jolly looking crowd, are n't they?" I said. "They look as if they were having a lot of fun about something, -- wish I was in the joke."

"See, we 're almost out of the river!" cried Twinny, hanging over the rail. "Is n't the lake lovely and foamy? Oh, we 're beginning to rock some! Is n't it fine? I don't mind it a bit."

"Look at the people at the life-saving station," called Bess. "See, they 're all waving to us. Let 's wave back. What are they all cheering and laughing for? I wonder — "

But we never did find out what Bess wondered; for, all of a sudden, the forward end of the boat seemed to rise straight up into the air, — and then, as suddenly, to drop to such a depth that the whole bunch of us, being absolutely unprepared for it, just simply took a "slide for life" clear across that deck, rolling and tumbling, chairs, boxes, and everything else, and never stopped until we brought up in a pile, close up against the cabin-door. There were about twenty others mixed up with us, and you never saw such a promiscuous bundle of people and things in all your life.

For a moment there was n't a sound, — every one was too astonished to open his mouth, — and then as the boat rose to meet another swell there came a regular Bedlam of cries and laughter and exclamations, and a wild scramble to get

out of the tangle. Uncle Fred had made a desperate grab at Bess when the lurch came, and there he was with his head under a chair and one hand ahold of her foot and the other clutching one of her long, brown braids. I had gripped the chair that one of the twins was in, and while we were doing stunts across that deck, I was conscious of wondering which one it was; and when I found that I had the empty chair, my first thought was to wonder which one I had lost. Positively, if I had to be in company with those girls for long, I 'd get loony for keeps, just from trying to find out which was who!

I was on my feet first. "Aunt Fannie, are you hurt?" I gasped, trying to unwrap one of Twinny's red sweaters from her head.

"No," she panted, grabbing wildly to save her hairpins and puffs. "No, we were sitting on camp-chairs, and they just shut up, and Mrs. Walker and I coasted down the deck on them until we ran into the crowd. That sweater was on the back of my chair, though, — how on earth did it get over my head?" and she looked around with suspicion in her eye.

Everybody was scrambling up and feeling of

arms and shoulders and knees; but no one had anything more to grumble over than a few bruises or skinned places. Twinny came in for a lot of sympathy at first; for she, both of her, had been eating some of those red plums, and she 'd held on to them all through the fracas, and they 'd smashed and decorated her and her clothes, until they looked as if they had had about six nose-bleeds apiece, all at the same time.

Uncle Fred tipped the chair off of his head "Well, Bess," he said, "I was going to have a lock of your hair and a little shoe to remember you by, anyway."

And just then the captain appeared in the door-way of the cabin, a broad grin on his face. "There 's no danger," he said, laughing. "There won't be any more like that. We got a big sea when she turned, coming out of the harbor; but there won't be any more bother. She 's headed for home now, and is taking the waves finely."

Every one heaved a sigh of relief; and then all of a sudden Twinny set up a shout. "Look at Chester, look at Chester!" — and every one did, and then every one proceeded to laugh.

I did n't know what on earth was the matter,

and began feeling of my face and head. Then I saw that every one was looking at my feet, and I looked down, and there was my straw hat, the rim of it, encircling my leg, half way to the knee. There was nothing left of the crown but a fringe of straw! I held up my foot and stared at it. "Gee," I said, "how did I do it? I must have got to turning somersaults again. Now, do you s'pose it went down over my head, or up over my foot?"

I kicked the thing off, and then went into the cabin for more chairs, and we formed a chain and passed them up to the stern, where we were sitting before, for the boat was rolling too much for us to try to carry anything, and then we sat down and held onto the rail, to keep from going skating, chairs and all, across the deck. The fruit had all gone overboard or been crushed to marmalade.

"And those plums were so awfully good," sighed Twinny, looking at her stained hands and dress.

"Let 's have the rest of the sandwiches," I said. "Excitement is a great thing for the appetite! Where are they, Aunt Fannie?"

Aunt Fannie did n't say a word; but she pointed

to something on the deck, a little way beyond us. Every one else had got up after the scrabble, and taken chairs where they could hold on to something; but there, on the floor, sat a fat, middle-aged man with a heavy, fleshy face and small, gray eyes. He sat flat upon the deck with his feet straight out before him and his hands resting, palm downward, on each side of him, to steady himself from the rolling of the boat. He sat perfectly still, as if glued to the deck, his face chalky white, his lower lip hanging loose and his eyes staring straight before him. He was the perfect picture of fright, and did n't seem to be conscious of anything but the terror that had hold of him.

"Why, the man 's fairly paralyzed with fear," said Uncle Fred.

"How foolish!" I said. "He 's in no more danger than the rest of us. Could n't he take the captain's word for it?" And just then I saw why Aunt Fannie had pointed at him, and I gave a groan; for that abominable heavy gentleman was sitting squarely upon our lunch-box! I could recognize it by the blue pasteboard and a couple of cream-puffs which had escaped

from it, — Aunt Fannie had saved those for supper!

The girls had n't discovered it yet, so I leaned over to them. "Bess," I said, "will you do me a favor?"

"Sure," said Bess.

"Well, go and ask the gentleman to kindly take this sweater to sit on, and let us have our lunch."

"Oh, oh, oh!" moaned the girls, as soon as they caught sight of the tragedy, "Oh, Chet, what made you tell us? We would n't have been nearly so hungry! Oh, dear, we 'll starve before we get home!"

"Well, we have a great deal to be thankful for," I said, solemnly.

"What?" asked Twinny, skeptically.

"That he did n't land on one of us, instead of on the box! Your name would have been Twinny Pancake, sure!"

Just then a man in uniform came out of the cabin and looked around. He saw the man on the floor, and came over to him. "Are you hurt?" he asked.

"No, no," mumbled the man.

"Well then, what 's the matter? Why don't

you get up?" and held out his hand to help him.

"No, no," mumbled the man again, shaking his head and catching his breath, "I'll sit here."

"Sure you're not hurt?" asked the sailor.

"No, it's the danger, the terrible —" and he began rocking himself back and forth.

The sailor stood and looked at him, and I should have thought that the big man would have shrivelled up and dropped through one of the cracks. "Didn't you hear what the captain said?" he demanded.

"Yes; but the waves, — oh!" as a particularly big one struck the boat and made it roll so that he nearly lost his balance, since his hands had nothing to clutch.

"And you're not sick?" asked the sailor.

"No, no, — go away and let me be!"

"You bet I will!" said the sailor, — and he did.

I began watching the wake of the boat. I really didn't care anything about the lunch; but I hated to see the man sit on it, when there were plenty of perfectly good chairs around. Bess was looking at me, and I commenced whistling and kicking my heels against the rail.

A good many of the people had gone into the cabin, and some of those who were outside did n't seem to be having a real good time. The boat kept rolling more and more and the movement was awfully unsteady. She would rise up, sharply, on a wave, seem to poise on the top for a moment, take a side-wise dip, and then suddenly the sea would seem to drop from under her in the most harrowing way, and in another second she would rise to meet another wave so quickly that you felt as if you 'd left something behind and needed it.

"Don't you think we 'd better go inside?" asked Uncle Fred, pretty soon.

"No," said Mrs. Walker, "My experience is, that one feels much better to stay out in the fresh air. I 've been on the water so much that I 'm never sea-sick."

"Oh, I 'm not sea-sick!" said Uncle Fred quickly. "I just thought that perhaps you ladies would be more comfortable inside, and -- "

"I 'm not comfortable inside," broke in Twinny, suddenly putting her head down on her mother's shoulder.

"I hate toasted marsh-mallows," groaned Twin-

ny, and down went her other head on the other shoulder; "I never want to see or smell another one!"

Mrs. Walker gathered them both into her white shawl. "Now," she said, "let 's make believe we are at home, and Mother is rocking you, just the way she used to when you were wee little girls," and she began humming a soft little song.

Bess and I kept on watching the wake of the boat, and the great waves that came rolling from under her. "Feeling all right, Bess?" I asked, presently.

"Yes, I am," said Bess. "It does n't bother me the least bit."

Just then Uncle Fred got up and tossed away his newspaper. "I guess I 'll go in," he said, hastily, and made for the cabin.

I caught the paper just as it was flying over the rail, and went and sat down in his chair. The paper was interesting, and I read for half an hour; and then I sat still and watched the little black and red and green blurred letters dance over the page. I kept on whistling, though, that is, I did as long as my mouth would continue to pucker; but when it absolutely refused, I jumped

up. "I 'm going to find Uncle Fred," I said, and skated away across the deck, as gay as you please.

I went away up in the bow and sat down on that same coil of rope; and began wondering what Bess did in a case like this. I 'd have given a whole lot to know, and to be able to do it myself, for I felt exactly like dish-water, and I 'd been fighting it for an hour. I had made up my mind that I positively *would n't* be sick; but I might as well have made up my mind to stop turning somersaults, coming down that sand dune; for it was evident that I was n't the boss in this case.

Just then along came Bess, clinging to the rail, her cheeks red and the wind whipping her hair. She came up to where I was, and stood holding onto the flag-staff and looking down at me; but there was n't a bit of "tease" in her eyes.

"Bess," I said, "I know exactly how a churn feels. The only ambition that stirs its soul, is for the dasher to let up for just one little second, so that it can get square with the world again, and start over."

Bess sat down beside me. "Chet," she said, "did you notice the effect the captain and his

uniform had upon the crowd, out there a while ago?"

I nodded.

"And did you notice the interest of every one in the sailor when he came out? — how they all asked him questions and seemed to like to have him about?"

"Yes," I said.

"And did it make you think about our talk of the captain of a boat, and about the uniforms?"

"Yes," I said, "it just dodged through my mind though, and I was going to take it up with myself later, when I felt as if I had some backbone, and my teeth were n't all floating around loose."

Bess laughed, and I groaned.

"Bess," I said, "here 's a dandy good job for you, why don't you get to work?"

"You have n't asked me to," said Bess.

"Well, for goodness' sake, does any one have to ask you, when you can see what 's needed?" I felt cross with Bess for that.

"Chet," she said, "suppose the buttons on your coat had sharp edges on them, so that they were cutting out the button-holes and fraying the goods, and you knew it and I knew it; — would I have

any right to cut those buttons off and sew on others without saying a word to you, or asking whether you wanted me to or not?"

I thought for a minute. "Well," I said, "of course it would seem sort of meddlesome, and I don't suppose I'd like it, not to be consulted at all."

"And how would I know that you wanted it done, if you did n't ask me to do it?"

"You could ask *me*," I said.

"But don't you think that, if you wanted it done, and knew that I could do it, and would be glad to, — don't you think that it would be worth the courtesy of asking me?"

"You 're right," I said, "I had n't thought about it that way. You really would n't know whether I wanted it done or not unless I asked you to, even though it looked to you as if it ought to be attended to. I might want to keep those buttons on for sentimental reasons, even if they did cut."

"That 's so," said Bess, "and I sometimes think that there are people who want to keep their sickness for sentimental reasons too; so they will have something to talk about, — or because

their father or grandfather had it before them, or to keep them company, or something like that."

And then we went to talking about some of the ideas she had, and I got so interested that I forgot whether we were on sea or on land, until suddenly I noticed that it was beginning to get dark, and that I was hungry again.

"Well," I said," what do you think of that! I feel as fit as a fiddle and you did n't have to do anything for me after all," and for some reason I felt sort of pleased over it.

"No," said Bess, "I did n't. It is n't the *person*, it 's the realization of the truth, which does the healing; and we have been talking a good deal of truth for the last hour."

Of course I could see that she was probably right; and that there was nothing for me to do but say "thank you," and then put the experience away to think about when I had lots of time and no interruptions.

We talked for a while longer, and then, when the lights of the city seemed very near, we went back to where the others were, to help gather up wraps and things, and get ready to go ashore. Twinny was heavy-headed and half asleep and

Uncle Fred was as cross as a bear, and did n't have any one to take it out on, so he just looked savage and hustled us ashore, as if every separate one of us was to blame for the whole thing.

However, when he felt his feet on solid ground again, he brightened up some, and so did the girls; and he piloted us all to a restaurant and set us up as fine a supper as he could think of; and, queerly enough, we were all ready for it; and got home in the finest humor ever.

CHAPTER VIII

BESS GOES STREET-CAR RIDING

THE next few days went faster than the speed limit, and ought to have been fined for "scorching." We did Chicago as thoroughly as it could be done, and saw so much that I began to feel as if my mental store-room was getting overcrowded. Bess called it my experimental-mental store-room because I had told her how I always took in everything that came along, if it looked as if it could ever be the least bit useful or interesting to me, and put it into that store-room; and then sometimes I would take a day off and go through the stock and pitch out what, upon closer examination, I was sure I would n't ever want, and put the things I did want in permanent storage, and the doubtful ones back in the shelves to look over again later on. Probably the next time I took 'em down, I 'd know for sure whether I wanted to keep 'em or not. I had Christian Science in there on the shelf, waiting for further investigation; and for the last week I 'd been piling in a lot of unsorted stuff of all kinds, until

Bess said she 'd bet the whole room looked like her top bureau drawer.

"Well," I said, "I 'll be so busy with it all when I get home, that I won't have a chance to get lonesome."

"What are you going to do first?" asked Bess.

"I 'm going to go in and kind of get things into shape, and bunch 'em in some sort of order, and then I 'm going to take down Christian Science and have a look at it, — and then I suppose I 'll put it up on the shelf again."

"H-m," said Bess, "What have you got on the shelf under that label?"

"Just some small samples."

"That is n't a very good stock to judge by, — just a few samples that you have happened to pick up. It does n't give you much to go on."

"No," I said, "That 's why I will probably put it back on the shelf, — I have n't enough to form a fair opinion."

Bess thought for a minute. "Chet," she said, "you are going to waste a lot of time that way. You ought to have the real thing to examine. Why don't you get the text-book?"

It was my turn to think. I had some money

to spend, which I had earned making collections for Dad; but it was n't any great amount, and I knew about what I wanted to do with it. Yet still I knew that this thing was going to stick to me until I got it decided. I could n't pitch it out if I wanted to, until I was sure that it was no good, and I could n't take it in for keeps until I had given it a fair going over; and I saw that I could n't do that without the book. I knew that Bess used hers so much that it would n't be right to ask to borrow it. I could see that I 'd got to come up against the thing some time, and I 'm for doing as soon as possible anything that 's standing looking at you and saying "Come on." Besides, I wanted to read the book.

"I don't know," I said, "I 'll see about it, but I suppose I 'll have to get it; for I can never leave things on the shelf long without their fermenting and getting the whole room mussed up."

One evening we went to a prayer-meeting at the Christian Science church. I was n't sure whether I wanted to go or not, but decided that as long as Bess wanted to, I might as well, and it would give me some more samples for the shelf in my store-room, -- and I was glad I went.

The church was different from any that I had ever been in before, — big and light and cheery, instead of dismal and heavy. I always wondered why folks thought they ought to be sober and sad when they thought of religion, and why they always associated religion with suffering and death. But here everything made you think of happiness and life, and every one seemed as if he had something to be glad about,— something that was lifting him up, instead of resting like a weight upon him. It surely did look good to me. I never saw a prayer-meeting that size before in my life. It was a tremendously big church, and it was crowded full, and people standing. When we were going home, I said to Bess,

"Was that a prayer-meeting?"

"Well," said Bess, "I don't see why it could n't be called a prayer-meeting."

"It was n't like any prayer-meeting I ever went to before, excepting when they said the Lord's Prayer."

Bess thought for a minute. "Prayer is communicating with God, is n't it?" she said.

"I suppose so."

"And if God knows everything, we don't have to tell Him a lot of things, do we?"

"Why, no."

"And God is Good?"

"Yes." She had explained that to me.

"Well then, thinking and talking good thoughts, must be prayer, because it is putting us right into touch with Him; and so I should think that was the very best kind of a prayer-meeting."

"Oh-h-h!" I said. I had just found something.

"What is it?" asked Bess.

"Why then, to 'pray without ceasing,' is just to think *really* right thoughts all the time."

Bess nodded. "Of course," she said.

"And there I always thought that phrase was an exaggeration and an impossibility, for I could n't see how any one could attend to business and do it. This is different. It would be a mighty good thing for one's business."

We walked on for a while and I thought it over. By and by I said, — "Bess, do you suppose that all of those people are sincere?"

Bess smiled. "Are you sincere in believing that two and two are four?"

"Of course," I said, "I could n't help believ-

ing it, if I wanted to, after I had once learned it, and knew why."

"Well, it 's the same with Christian Science. If you once understand it, you have n't any more choice in the matter than you have in two and two, — you 've got it, and it 's got you, and it is n't a question of whether you want to be sincere or not — you, simply *know* it, and that settles it for you, and you can't get away from it."

I looked at her and wondered if I would ever come to see it that way. We did n't talk much the rest of the way home. I was in my experimental-mental store-room, and streets and houses and people were n't anywhere. Some one had said something about feeling kindly toward every one, whether they were of the same religion or not, and that people's opinions about God and Christ ought to be the last thing in the world to separate them from one another, and that gave me a lot to think about.

When we reached Aunt Fannie's, I got into a Morris chair and went back into my store-room until Uncle Fred, with a tease is his eyes, said, — "Chet, you 're in a brown study. That 's bad. Don't take up a religion where you have to think.

Don't puzzle over the deep things. Take up something where all you have to do is to be good according to rules laid down, — then you don't have to exercise your gray matter. It 's much easier and more comfortable, and does n't interfere with your usual pursuits."

"But we *have* to think sometimes," I said, "It 's in us."

Uncle Fred shook his head solemnly and pulled down the corners of his mouth. "Chester," he said, "I am compelled to believe that you and Elizabeth think too much. When one thinks too much, one asks questions — hard questions — and people who ask hard questions are n't popular in most circles."

"They are in ours," said Bess.

"Well, yours may be an exception," said Uncle Fred, "and if you get 'em answered, you 'll know too much, and the rest of us will have to —"

"Have to what?" asked Aunt Fannie.

Uncle Fred heaved a funny sigh. "Do some studying to catch up."

I was in Chicago for ten days; but where they went, I 'll never know. They just dropped into

the past so fast that I lost count. We saw Twinny several times; but I never got real well acquainted with her; for just about the time that I began to think that I knew her pretty well, I 'd find she was the other one, and then I 'd have to begin all over. Other people did n't seem to have so much trouble, for they were contented to just bunch them, and let it go at that; but I liked one so much better than the other, and could n't keep track of which one it was, and it bothered me. The day I started for home, Bess and I went down town early and I got my Christian Science text-book, and took it along to read on the train. I knew it was up to me to do it, because the subject sat on the edge of the shelf and stared at me all the time, and I had to tackle it or have it interfering with all the work I wanted to do in that room. Bess had changed the name of my store-room, and now she called it my "brown study." She got that from Uncle Fred, and it was n't at all bad.

I did n't read on the way home, after all; for there was a man in my seat who had been a rail-road man for twenty-five years, and he got to telling me about things, — how to figure on how

fast the train was going, by counting the jars at the rail-ends, to see how many to the minute, and counting each rail as thirty feet long, and fifty-two hundred and eighty feet to the mile. It was mighty interesting. And he told me a lot about telegraph poles, and how long they lasted, and how they were putting in cement bases to make them last longer, because they decayed first underground. He had travelled all over the country and knew about every town in it. I asked him what was the very most satisfactory place, in every way, that he had ever found, — that is, where he would settle if he had his choice of every place where he had ever been, and he said Seattle. I was never so surprised in my life, for I had always thought of that town as being so far away from everything, — just about the jumping-off-place. I asked if it was because he liked some one there, and he said no, that it was simply the all-round nicest place that he had ever struck, and suited him down to the ground. I can't understand it yet, for on the map it looks so sort of lonesome and away from us, but he was mighty certain in his own mind.

After I got home I was so busy for a few days

that I did n't get a chance for even a peep into either the book or the brown study, — and then came a letter from Bess. It did n't begin like most letters, but started in this way: —

"Good-morning. What 's the use of labelling a friendly letter at the start, just as if you were likely to forget who you were writing to, and have to turn back every now and then, to find out? When I meet you on the street, I don't start in with 'Dear Chet,' and then say what I have on my mind, and I don't see why I should in a letter.

"Father got in here last night, and we are going to leave to-morrow for Indianapolis. Don't mind that the *t's* and *l's* in this letter seem to feel themselves so much above the others. That is because my type-writer had a set-to with some expressman on the way here, and came out wabbly. At least, I suppose that is what happened. I doctored it with my manicure set, but it is n't on the level yet. I 'm going to have it fixed in Indianapolis. I did n't dare to tell you, when you were here, that it was n't working right, for I knew you would get at it — and I was afraid it would come out worse than it did with the expressman.

"Night before last I went out with Uncle Fred. We went to the University. You see, he had run across a girl he knew, and found that a friend of both of them was attending the University and so they agreed to go out there and call, and he asked me to go along, — because it was just about the only place that I had n't been. The girl who went with us is just as sweet as she can be. She 's little and pretty and jolly and her name is Kathleen, and her eyes looked so loving that I had hold of her hand before I knew it, and she was telling me about her pansies and nasturtiums, and just how she planted sweet-peas. I don't see how she knew right off that I love flowers!

"Uncle Fred had telephoned to Miss Mills, at the University, that we were coming; and we started at about half-past seven, because he said it was so far out there, and when we got down town, he said we had to take a cable car. Miss Kathleen asked why it would n't be better to take a suburban railroad train, because it would be so much quicker, but Uncle Fred insisted that Miss Mills said for us to take a cable car, and he was going to exactly follow her directions. Miss Kathleen did n't insist, because she does n't

know the town very well, either, and was n't sure whether the suburban line went there. I don't believe that it would have made any difference if she had, for Uncle Fred is awfully stubborn when he is n't sure about a thing.

"We went over to Wabash Avenue and stopped on a corner to wait for a car.

"'Fred,' said Miss Kathleen, after a while, 'this is the wrong corner.'

"'No,' said Uncle Fred, 'they stop on the near side of the street here.'

"'I don't think so,' said Miss Kathleen. 'I 'm almost sure they stop on the far side.'

"'You watch and see,' said Uncle Fred, grinning. 'I 'll bet you that longest stemmed American Beauty,' and he pointed toward a florist's window across the street, 'against that pink cosmos you 're wearing.'

"'Done,' said Miss Kathleen.

"I did n't say a word; for I knew that he would wait on that corner until a car came along, if the whole of Chicago told him differently.

"We waited a while longer. 'Guess there 's a tie-up somewhere,' said Uncle Fred, standing on one foot.

"'We might save time by getting the rose while we wait,' said Miss Kathleen.

"'Not on your life,' said Uncle Fred. 'That cosmos blossom —' but just then a train of three cars came in sight around a corner up the street. 'There she comes!' he cried, 'Get ready to pile on.'

"It took the train ever so long to reach us, and when it was almost there, we stepped down from the curbing and Uncle Fred held up his hand for them to stop; but the grip-man shook his head, and as the last car sailed by, the conductor leaned off and put his hand up to his mouth and yelled, 'Go to the other corner!'

"'The dickens!' said Uncle Fred, and looked as if he wanted to punch the conductor; then he grabbed Miss Kathleen's arm and my hand, and started after the car.

"Miss Kathleen tried to hang back. 'We can't get it now, Fred,' she said. 'See, there are only two people to get on, and it won't wait for us.'

"'Yes it will,' cried Uncle Fred, hustling us along, 'Come on!' But it did n't wait, and in a minute we were standing in the middle of the muddy street, and the car was bowling along just out of reach.

"Uncle Fred looked after it for about a second, and then he shrugged his shoulders, 'Let 's go in and buy that rose,' he said.

"Just as we turned toward the curb, a little newsboy, the very littlest one I ever saw, jumped off of it and started to run across the street. I had n't noticed him before, and he started so quickly, yelling his papers, that I turned suddenly and stumbled against him, and he went sprawling into the mud

"I was never so surprised in all my life, and just stood staring, with my mouth open. Uncle Fred and Miss Kathleen turned at the sound of the fall, and I pointed to where the little fellow was scrambling to his feet, and gasped, 'I knocked that little boy down!'

"Uncle Fred looked at me indignantly. 'Well,' he said, severely, 'I 'm sure *that* 's nothing to brag of. He is n't more than half as big as you are.' Then he called the boy and gave him a quarter. 'You must excuse the young lady there,' he said, pointing to me; 'She 's from the country, and is sort of savage yet; but you need n't be afraid — I 'll see that she does n't do it again.'

"The boy grinned and shoved the money into

his pocket, and then we went into the flower store, and Miss Kathleen came out with three big American Beauties, and I had some Killarney buds, and Uncle Fred had the cosmos. Another car was just coming along, and Uncle Fred hurried us aboard.

"'Are you sure this is the right car?' asked Miss Kathleen.

"'Sure,' said Uncle Fred. 'She said to take a Cottage Grove car labelled "Jackson Park," and that it was blue, and I saw the name on the grip.'

"'But this car is green,' said Miss Kathleen.

"'Well, the grip and the other car are blue, and this one can't go traipsing off by itself without any grip, can it, just because it happens to be green? I guess we 're safe enough. You two may as well settle down; for it takes nearly an hour to get there.' Then he and Miss Kathleen went to talking about the folks in their home town, and I began looking out of the rear window. and watching the high buildings seem to rise up behind the nearer ones, as we drew away from them.

"We had been riding for about ten minutes, when at one of the stops there was a great rattling of chains and shouting, and then we started off

again and turned a corner with a sharp swing, and went spinning along so differently that I sat up and began to take notice. The car was singing and buzzing, instead of rattling and jarring, as it did before, and I began to wonder. Uncle Fred and Miss Kathleen were so busy talking that they had n't noticed anything. I leaned forward and tried to look out of the front end of the car; but the windows only reflected the inside, and so I turned and looked backward again, with my hand up beside my face; but there was n't anything in particular to see. By and by we swung around another corner, and I could tell by the way we went around, that we were n't hitched to any other car, — there was n't any jarring of the couplings.

"When I was real sure, I leaned over. 'Uncle Fred,' I said.

"'Well?' said Uncle Fred, 'Getting tired?'

"'No; but you said this car could n't go traipsing off by itself.'

"'That 's what I did,' said Uncle Fred, cheerfully.

"'Well, Uncle Fred,' I said, 'It *is*.'

"'It is what?'

"'Going by itself.'

"He looked at me and smiled with pleased interest. 'What 's the joke, Elizabeth?'

"'I don't know as there is any joke,' I said; 'but you said it was a cable car, and it sounds like a trolley, and I 'm sure it is n't hitched to anything.'

"'Wake up, Elizabeth,' he said, patiently, 'Wake up, we 'll soon be there. You dreamed —' and then he suddenly pricked up his ears and wrinkled his forehead; '*Does* sound like a trolley, though, does n't it? That 's funny.'

"Just then the conductor came through. Uncle Fred stopped him. 'What motive power has this car?' he asked, sort of accusingly.

"'Trolley,' answered the conductor.

"Uncle Fred looked around at us and at the passengers and then back to the conductor. 'Perhaps my memory deceives me,' he remarked; 'but I had the impression that I boarded a cable car.'

"The conductor laughed. 'Yes,' he said, 'the cable takes this car to Eighteenth Street, and then she takes the trolley wire.'

"'And where does this car go?" asked Uncle Fred, keeping his face turned away from us.

"'Down Indiana Avenue.'

"'Will it land us anywhere near the University?'

"'About two miles.'

"Uncle Fred groaned. 'See here,' he said, 'if you wanted to go to the University and had n't any tag around your neck, what would you do?'

"'Well,' said the conductor, 'if you had spoken before we got to Eighteenth Street, I could have transferred you to the car ahead; but as it is, I guess you 'd better stay on until we get to Thirty-first Street, and I 'll give you transfers onto the Thirty-first Street line, and then the conductor on that line will give you transfers back onto the Cottage Grove line.'

"'All right,' said Uncle Fred, meekly, 'anything you say. Give us the transfers, and if I don't get off at the right street, just kindly throw me off, will you?'

"The conductor laughed again and punched some long pink slips and held them out; but Uncle Fred shook his head and pointed to me. 'Give them to the lady,' he said, 'I 'm not responsible.'

"I folded the slips and put them into my pocket, and then we rode for quite a long time. By and

by the conductor came and told us to get off, and showed us which corner to go to, and warned us to take a car going the right way; and in a few minutes we were bowling along again in a trolley. We did n't ride very long that time, and when we got off, we were close to the lake again, and I could see over a stone wall, the little shining waves, with the moonlight making a path across them. I 'd have liked to stay and watch it; but a blue cable train was coming, and it was labelled 'Cottage Grove Avenue' all right, so Uncle Fred hustled us on again, and we began rattling and rumbling along.

"Uncle Fred leaned back and heaved a sigh of relief, as soon as we were seated, and they went to talking again, and I put my hand up beside my face and looked out of the rear window. It was n't a pretty street, such as you would expect from the name, for it was all made up of small stores and shops, and sometimes the entrance to a little park with trees and houses, and sometimes I could catch a gleam of the lake, at the ends of the cross streets. And then, by and by, the stores stopped and there began to be houses, and then there were a lot of trees and bushes on one side

and I knew it was a large park, but I had n't an idea which one for I was so mixed up. I saw some fountains, and it was beautiful in under the dark trees, where the moonlight spotted the ground.

"After a while Uncle Fred turned around. 'Feeling lonesome?' he asked. 'It 's a shame to neglect you this way.'

"'No, no,' I said, 'I 'm enjoying it. I told you not to bother about me. You can't see Miss Kathleen every day.'

"'I wish I could,' he said, and then they both laughed. 'Well, we 're 'most there, anyway, I guess,' and just then the conductor came through. 'Stop at Ellis Avenue, please,' said Uncle Fred, carelessly. He had got back all his confidence.

"'Ain't on our line,' said the conductor.

"Uncle Fred's jaw dropped. He looked as if he wanted to say something large, but was n't equal to the size of it, and so just gave up. He sat and stared at the conductor for about a minute. At last he sort of moistened his lips and swallowed hard. 'It is n't on this line?' he said, in a thin sort of a voice. 'Is n't this the Cottage Grove line?'

"'Yes.'

"'And this car does n't go to Ellis Avenue?'

"'No.'

"'Well then, where — where in eternity *does* it go?'

"'To Oakwoods Cemetery,' said the conductor.

CHAPTER IX

THE REST OF BESS'S LETTER

"MISS KATHLEEN and I snickered. Uncle Fred just sat and looked at the conductor and kept on moistening his lips. By and by he spoke. 'Don't you think your street car system is a trifle complicated?' he asked sarcastically.

"'Not at all,' said the conductor, swelling out his chest. 'You ought to of got onto a Jackson Park train instead of this, that 's all.'

"Uncle Fred bit his under lip. He had forgotten about looking at the grip to see whether it was a Jackson Park train.

"'Tain't too late, though,' said the conductor, after enjoying Uncle Fred's face for a minute. 'We ain't to Fifty-fifth Street yet. I 'll give you transfers and you can change there.'

"Uncle Fred did n't look at either of us, but sat and fingered the transfers. After a while he turned to Miss Kathleen. 'Do you remember Mark Twain's "Pink trip slip for a six-cent fare, punch in the presence of the passengaire"?

Well, I 'm getting these transfers on the brain. First Bess had three pink ones, and then she had seventeen blue ones, and now I have thirty-two orange ones – I think there 's thirty-two - - thirty-two, please count 'em,' and he put his hand to his head. But just then we came to where there was a tall switch-tower, and on the other side, a great building full of machinery, and we got off there. I wanted, perfectly dreadfully, to go into the power-house, as Uncle Fred called it, for I could see, through the windows, the great wheels turning and the bands flying; but it was getting so late in the evening that I did n't dare to even suggest it.

"Pretty quick a car came along; but Uncle Fred would n't let us get aboard until he had called to the conductor and asked if it went to Ellis Avenue.

"'Sure,' said the conductor, 'Come on,' and we climbed in.

"'Now,' said Uncle Fred, as we ranged ourselves along the seat, 'we 're hot on the trail. It can't get away from us this time, that 's sure,' and he began to look quite brash again. 'She said to get off at Ellis Avenue,' he went on, 'and

go straight south and we 'd come to Foster Hall — could n't miss it!'

"'She does n't know you very well, does she?' asked Miss Kathleen, laughing a little. Then she stared down at her muddy shoes and the draggled edge of her gown; but she could n't look sober for two seconds, and the dimples kept chasing around the corners of her mouth every time she caught a glimpse of my eyes. We had n't either of us dared to laugh as much as we wanted to, for fear of hurting Uncle Fred's feelings, but I 'd been getting fuller and fuller ever since we started, and it positively seemed as if I could not keep it in two seconds longer. When I caught her eye I did give one little squeal, and then I tried to turn it into a cough, and Uncle Fred looked at me suspiciously and opened his mouth, and just then the conductor called 'Ellis Avenue.'

"We climbed off and started down the street. It did n't take long to get there, and Uncle Fred went up the wide steps of the long building, looking sort of triumphant, and with his shoulders well back, and Miss Kathleen and I followed, shaking out our skirts and patting our hair into place.

"Just inside of the door was what appeared to be an office, and two men were sitting there. Uncle Fred walked up to one of them. 'We would like to see Miss Mills,' he said, taking out some cards.

"'What is the name?' asked the man.

"'The names are on the cards,' said Uncle Fred, rather stiffly.

"'I mean the name you asked for,' said the man.

"'Oh! Miss Mills.'

"The man shook his head. 'We have no one of that name here,' he said.

"'Oh, yes you have,' said Uncle Fred, very decidedly; 'Miss Eleanor Mills, of Tennessee.'

"The man shook his head again. 'No,' he said, 'there 's no such name on our books.'

"Uncle Fred began to look annoyed. 'I don't wish to dispute you,' he said, with a whole lot of dignity; 'but she told me that she was here. I had her on the telephone this afternoon. Of course it is possible that she did n't know where she was staying, but she *seemed* to. She was here all last year, as well.'

"The man pursed his lips. 'I don't know any such name,' he said again.

"Uncle Fred squared his shoulders and threw back his head. 'Probably not,' he said, cuttingly; 'but perhaps you can direct me to some one possessed of some knowledge of this institution.'

"The man glowered at him. 'I 'm in charge here,' he said, gruffly.

"Uncle Fred glanced around at us with an expression which said 'Stick to the ship, I 'll take her through,' and then he turned back to the man, who was standing with both hands on the desk and looking like Gibraltar. They stared at each other for about a minute; and then Uncle Fred began, very slowly; 'My friend, Miss Eleanor Mills, of Tennessee, informed me to-day that she was here at Foster Hall — this is Foster Hall, I believe?'

"A slow grin overspread the man's face. 'Well no — not exactly,' he drawled, 'This is the Home for Incurables.'

"I wish you could have seen Uncle Fred's face. He opened and shut his mouth several times before any words came. At last he said, in a little, small voice, —

"'You have n't any room here for me, have you?'

"The man looked him over. 'Well,' he said, 'we 're pretty full at present, but in urgent cases like yours —'

"But Miss Kathleen and I did n't wait to hear any more. We bolted, and then we dropped down on the steps and hugged each other and laughed until we were so weak that we could scarcely sit up.

"After a while Uncle Fred came out, mopping his face with his handkerchief. 'It 's on me, girls,' he said, dismally. 'I don't like to confess it, for I 'm not a real old man yet, but I 'm certainly in my second childhood. Do either of you feel equal to leading this expedition? Of course things are looking up a little, — that is, there is a shade more of cheerfulness in the Home for Incurables, as contrasted with the cemetery, but the next stop is so blamed uncertain —'

"Miss Kathleen rose up. 'I 'll be pilot,' she said, determinedly, 'and if it 's on Ellis Avenue, I 'll find it,' and she picked up her skirts and marched down the steps, Uncle Fred and I following meekly.

"She got us there all right, and we had an

awfully good time with Miss Mills; but we did n't tell her anything about our troubles on the way, for Uncle Fred looked so afraid we would, that we had n't the heart to. Of course I did n't see much of the University, but what I did see I 'll tell you about when I get home.

"When it was time to go, Miss Mills said we 'd better take the suburban train because it was so much quicker. She said that she had suggested our coming the way we did, so that we could see a little more of the city, and Uncle Fred said it was kind of her. Then she got out her time-table and said that there was a train every half-hour at that time of night, and that we had just about time to get one; and so we started in a hurry.

"'Don't you think we 'd better go back the way we came?' asked Uncle Fred, as soon as we were out of doors. 'We know that route now.'

"'Do we?' said Miss Kathleen, scornfully. 'I doubt it. No, sir, I 'm pilot, and I 'm going to take you safe home in the shortest possible time.'

"So off we started, Miss Kathleen chatting and laughing over her visit with Miss Mills, and Uncle Fred staring around gloomily and shaking

his head. By and by he looked at his watch. 'We 've got to hurry,' he said.

"'We 're almost there,' said Miss Kathleen, 'See, there 's the viaduct she told us about.'

"We hurried along and went in under the shadow of the great girders and there, sure enough was a turn-stile and a little ticket-office; but there was no light in the ticket-office, and the turn-stile only turned one way, and that was the way that kept us out.

"Uncle Fred looked at Miss Kathleen and smiled cheerfully, —I could see by the sputtering electric light across the street. 'We 've got just three minutes,' he remarked.

"'Well, why don't you do something?' exclaimed Miss Kathleen, desperately.

"'I could climb over,' said Uncle Fred, 'Could you?'

"'No,' said Miss Kathleen, 'I could n't, and you could n't, either. The space at the top would n't even let Bess through. No, do something else. The ticket-agent must be asleep, — pound on the window.'

"Uncle Fred tried to look through the glass, but it was all dark, so he began to pound on the

window-frame with his cane; and then a big policeman loomed out of the darkness beyond the viaduct, and came up to us scowling.

"'What you trying to do?' he asked.

"Uncle Fred looked at him and took on his funny, meek little way that reminds me of Uncle Rob. 'Well,' he said, 'I was trying to break through and steal an engine, but now you 've come, I suppose it 's all up. You see, we were wanting to go down town, and we can't seem to get the hang of your transportation system here. I thought that if I could manage to swipe an engine or a hand-car — but since you 're here, of course it 's no use.'

"The policeman grinned. 'I guess some tickets will do you all right. This entrance is n't open in the evening. You have to go to the regular station, around in the next street.'

"Miss Kathleen grabbed my hand and started to run the minute the policemen's club pointed the direction; but just then there came a rumble and a roar, and we stopped short and held our ears until the train had passed over our heads. Then Miss Kathleen turned to Uncle Fred, 'What now?' she asked helplessly.

"'Half an hour until the next train,' said Uncle Fred, pleasantly.

"'Maybe there might be an extra,' said Miss Kathleen, and she led the way around to the regular ticket-office. A sleepy-looking agent was sitting at the window.

"'When will there be another train?' asked Miss Kathleen.

"'North or south, lady?' asked the man, yawning.

"'Why — why —' began Miss Kathleen, looking around at us uncertainly.

"Uncle Fred was studying the girders over his head.

"'To the city,' I whispered.

"'Why, yes, certainly, to the city, of course,' said Miss Kathleen.

"'Twenty-five minutes,' said the man.

"Miss Kathleen looked discouraged. 'Is there any other way to get down town?' she asked.

"'Cottage Grove cable, if you walk four or five blocks north,' pointing with his thumb.

"'But there are so many changes on that line,' complained Miss Kathleen.

"The ticket-agent looked surprised. 'There ain't no changes on that line, lady,' he said.

"Miss Kathleen looked at him and then at Uncle Fred. 'We changed nineteen times coming out,' she said.

"'Well,' said the agent, shrugging his shoulders, 'of course you *could* change at every corner if you wanted to; but there ain't no reason why you should, unless for exercise.'

"Miss Kathleen stared at him in a dazed sort of a way, and then turned from the window. 'Well,' she said, 'I guess we 'd better take the cable. I 'd be rather afraid to get on a regular railroad train after all this. I feel sort of foggy, and we might land in Milwaukee or Kalamazoo —'

"'Or Kankakee,' suggested Uncle Fred.

"' — and the cable certainly can't get us out of Chicago without our knowing it, and that 's something to consider. Bess, dear, won't you be pilot? I want to resign before things get any worse.'

"'All right,' I said, and marched off ahead in the dark, going the way the agent had pointed. I asked questions of every policeman I saw, and in just a few minutes we came in sight of a little

brick office with a blue cable train standing in front of it.

"I went up to the conductor. 'Does this train go to Wabash Avenue and Madison Street?' I asked.

"'It surely does,' said he.

"'Do we have to change cars?'

"'Not a change.'

"My, but I was proud! We got on and I sat down in one corner and went to thinking over our experiences, just as if I were telling you about it all, and when I came to the 'Home for Incurables' part, I had some work to do. I wish they 'd change the name of it, Chet. Just think of going to live in a place with a name like that! It 's like having over the entrance: 'All ye who enter here, leave hope behind.' I 'm sure that they will see it right some day, and change the name to something cozy and hopeful that will make the people there feel a thrill of confidence in good, every time that they say it or write it. I went to trying to think up just exactly the best name; and then by and by I felt my head bumping against the window-frame and Miss Kathleen drew it over onto her shoulder, — and then we

were going up stairs to the elevated. Uncle Fred really does know all about the elevated, so I did n't feel responsible any more, — and by and by we were out in the cool night air again, and the lake was looking black before us, — and then I was in my room and Aunt Fannie was helping me undress,— and then it was morning.

"You said in your letter that some people claimed to be healed by reading the Christian Science text-book, and you said that it was absurd, when there was a visible physical manifestation to show that something was wrong. (I 'm glad you admitted that you hunted up those words in the dictionary, for I knew they did n't come natural.) I suppose you think that a case like that could n't be healed by anything but medicine, — at least, you *think* that you think so. That is because both the 'manifestation' and the medicine are what you call 'real.' Now just suppose that you were to come in and find me crying — the tears running down my face, wet, watery tears that you could see and feel; would n't that be what you call a 'visible physical manifestation showing something is wrong'? Would you rush off and get some medicine to put into my stomach to stop

the water coming out of my eyes, — or would you get a surgeon to sew the lids together so they could n't leak? If you did, you 'd be trying to stop the effect without paying any attention to the real cause. (Maybe you *would* stop it for a minute, by attracting my attention, but as soon as I stopped thinking about the new ideas, I'd begin to cry again.) But suppose that instead of that, you went to work to find out what the trouble might be, and then helped me out of it, whatever it was; would n't you stop the tears a whole lot sooner, even if they were real, wet, watery tears? You see, in some cases you'd do exactly as we do; and the only difference is that we know that *all* seeming 'physical manifestations of trouble' have a mental source, and we do our work upon that, the cause, instead of trying to wrestle with the effect.

"Now, if a person is in trouble, the way to stop the tears is to tell him something which shows that he has n't, *really*, any cause for them; that is, make him understand that there is n't any such cause, and then he can't cry if he wants to; and the way we stop other 'manifestations of trouble,' called sickness, is by making him

understand that there is n't any cause for that; and then the appearance stops of itself. Don't you see?

"Now it does n't make any difference whether the person gets that understanding by some one telling him, or whether he gets it out of a book, does it? And if he gets it out of a book, has n't the book healed him?

"Think it over for a while, Chet, and see if it is such an absurd idea, after all."

CHAPTER X

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COUNTER

THE next piece of news was when Dad told me that he had hired Uncle Rob to clerk in the store for the Winter. I was mighty pleased, but I knew that Uncle Rob had never clerked before, and that he was up against something which was going to give him some experience that would make his hair curl, and so I felt a little bit sorry for him. You see, our store was the kind that you always find in a town of about ten or twelve thousand people, and carried about everything outside of dry-goods and groceries and hardware. It was a big three-story brick building, and there were pianos, and organs, and silverware, and plush goods, and books, and stationery, and pictures, and a picture-framing department upstairs, and toys, and holiday stuff, — and five million other things. It takes some time to learn a stock like that. I knew it pretty well, because I 'd been browsing around the place ever since I was big enough to walk, and so Dad said I 'd better go down with Uncle Rob the first day, which

was Saturday, so as to show him the ropes. I did n't mind at all for there were a lot of new goods just in, and I wanted to see what sort of stuff Dad had been getting.

Well, that morning we got down at eight o'clock sharp, and I took him behind the counter right off and began opening drawers and boxes to show him where things were. Dad was back in the office, and the cashier, Miss Weed, was at her desk. The first person to come in was a school-teacher. She walked up to the counter in front of Uncle Rob. "Reward cards," she said.

"Yes, madam," said Uncle Rob, and led the way down the store as if he had been at that sort of thing all his life. He remembered the shelf that I had showed him, and he took down the stack of big sheets that had the sample cards pasted onto them, and laid it on the show-case before her. They were pieces of white pasteboard about ten by fifteen inches, all the same size, and each had four or five cards pasted on, showing one of each design in the set; and at the top, printed in big letters, was the price and the number of cards in the package.

The woman turned the sheets over for a moment. "I don't want such big ones," she said.

"Here are some that are not so large," said Uncle Rob, drawing out a sample of smaller ones.

The woman looked at them. "Those are too big," she said.

Uncle Rob turned over the pile and brought out some about two inches square.

The woman scowled. "They 're too big, I say," she said.

Uncle Rob looked at her and then at me. "Have you any smaller ones?" he asked me. I shook my head. I wanted to suggest that she get the kids postage stamps; but I did n't dare.

"We have no smaller ones," said Uncle Rob.

The woman scowled again. "What 's in those boxes?" she said, pointing to the stock, up in the shelves.

"Those are the same cards which you have here," said Uncle Rob, laying his hand on the pile of samples.

The woman looked at the samples and then back at the boxes, and her eyes got narrow. She held up one of the sheets. "Do you mean to

tell me," she said, "that these cards are in those boxes up there?"

"Yes, madam," said Uncle Rob, looking bewildered.

The woman began to get excited. She held up the sheet in both hands and fairly shoved it into Uncle Rob's face. "You tell me that a card the size of that, is in one of those little boxes —"

"Yes, madam, —" and then suddenly Uncle Rob saw the point. "Oh, I beg your pardon!" he said, "You have there just the sample sheet, you know. This is the size of the card," and he drew his pencil around the outline of one of the cards on the sheet.

"It is? Well, why did n't you say so?"

Uncle Rob did n't reply, but spread out the sheets on the show-case.

"How much are these?" asked the woman.

"Fifteen cents a package," said Uncle Rob. "The price is right here at the top of all of them," and he put his pencil on the figures.

"How many in a package?"

"Ten," and his pencil followed to the figures.

The woman pushed the sheet aside and picked up another. "How much are these?"

"Twenty-five cents a package," and his pencil pointed to the printed price again.

"How many in a package?"

"Ten."

"Are there ten in all the packages?"

"I believe so."

"How much are these?"

"Fifteen cents."

"How many in a package?"

"Ten," said Uncle Rob.

"And these?" She was holding it with her thumb over the price.

"I — I can't see," said Uncle Rob, reaching out his hand for the sheet.

"Don't you know the price of your goods?"

Uncle Rob bit his lip, then he smiled. "Not always, without looking at the mark," he said.

The woman sniffed, then she shifted her thumb.

"Ten cents," said Uncle Rob.

"How many in a package?"

Her thumb was over the other figures by this time, and so Uncle Rob made a guess. "Ten," he said.

"Well, I'll take a package of those." She

laid down the sheet, and there, where her thumb had been was the figure "8." I snickered.

Uncle Rob pressed his lips together for a moment, then: "I beg your pardon, madam," he said, "there are only eight in this package."

"You said ten." The woman looked at him as if she had caught him trying to cheat her.

"I was mistaken," said Uncle Rob, quietly.

She threw the sheet aside and looked some more. By and by she picked up another, "Let me see some of these," she said.

Uncle Rob hesitated. "How many packages do you wish?" he asked pleasantly.

"I said I wanted to see them," said the woman.

"There is a sample of each card, on the sheet," said Uncle Rob. You see, I had told him not to get out the cards themselves, except to sell them, because that was the rule.

The woman glared at him. "I say I want to see them," she said.

Uncle Rob glanced at me helplessly, and then turned to the shelves and found the box and laid one of the packages before her. She took it, broke the paper band, and spread the cards out among the samples, then she shoved them aside

and picked up another sample sheet. "Let me see these," she said.

"They are all there on the sheet, madam," said Uncle Rob; "See, here is one card like each one in the package."

The woman set her lips. "I say I want to see the package."

Uncle Rob looked at me again, and then turned and found the box and handed her a package. She scattered that, like the other, and then said, "Let me see some of these."

Uncle Rob did n't say a word; he just meekly turned around and took down the box. She took out one package and scattered the cards, and then another, and then asked to see some more.

Uncle Rob had got beyond saying a thing; — he just looked sort of dazed, and for half an hour he stood there and handed her out packages of reward cards; and then she picked up her purse and shopping bag. "I may be in again this afternoon," she said; "I want to see what they 've got at Wagner's and at Martin's," and she walked off down the store.

Uncle Rob watched her out of the door, and then looked down at the stack of cards and sample

sheets on the counter; then he looked at me and wabbled back against the shelving. "Chet," he said, putting up his hands as if to ward off something, "Chet, she says she 's coming back! Is there a place under any of these counters where I can duck in a hurry?" Then he pointed at the counter; — "Is that why you said not to get out the packages?"

"Yep," I said.

He nodded his head. "Chester," he said, "it is a very wise rule; but the lady had a very compelling way with her, did you happen to notice that? It would almost seem as if she got the better of me, would n't it?"

"It pretty near would," I said.

"I want to tell you, though, Chester, that I am very happy; — I don't know when I have been happier, — I was happy all the time she was here."

"You managed to hide it fairly well," I said.

"Deceitful appearances, my dear Chester. My joy and self-gratulation in that I don't have to go to school to her, nearly overwhelmed me."

"You looked overwhelmed all right enough," I said.

"Yes," he said, "I should dislike to go to school

to a woman like that, — I should have such a hard time reforming her."

Uncle Rob was sorting out the cards and putting new bands on the packages, and matching them with the samples so as to get them into the right boxes, when Dad came along. He stopped and looked at the pile. "Chester," he said, "you ought to have told Robert that it was n't necessary to get out the cards; because they are all on the sample sheets. See, Robert, there is one card of each pattern, on a sheet, and the price, and number in a package, is printed right there at the top."

"Yes, sir," said Uncle Rob, meekly, and Dad passed on.

Just then an old farmer came in and walked up to the counter. "I want a horse book," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Uncle Rob, and started down the store. As he passed me he whispered; "What the dickens is a horse book?"

"A book about raising horses," I answered. "They 're back there with the dialogue books and short cuts to arithmetic."

He got it all right, and sold it without any trouble, and left the cash-desk just as a man came

up and asked for a mortgage. He 'd left a farm wagon at the curb.

Uncle Rob looked doubtful. "A — a mortgage on what?"

"Why, just a mortgage," said the man.

"He-wants-a-blank-form," said the cashier, — she always talks very fast and runs her words together, — "In-the-upper-drawer-there-with-the-legal-blanks."

Uncle Rob pulled open the drawer and began laying out the packages of forms. By and by he came to the package marked "Mortgages," and was just taking one out, when the cashier craned her neck to look at the label and then said to the man; "Did-you-want-it-with-or-without-dower?"

The man stared at her. "Well — I —" he began.

"Give-it-to-him-with-and-then-if-he-does n't-want-it-he-can-scratch-it-out."

"Well — I —" began the man again; but the cashier pointed to one of the packages.

"That 's-it."

Uncle Rob took out the blank and rolled it in paper, and the man paid for it hesitatingly, and went away.

Five minutes after, while Uncle Rob was helping one of the high-school girls to choose a novel, in came the man again, out of breath and his face red. "This ain't right," he said, holding out the roll.

Uncle Rob saw that it had n't been undone; for he recognized his style of wrapping. "What 's the matter with it?" he asked.

"'T ain't right," said the man. "The lady over there," and he pointed the roll at the cashier, "said something about a widder without dower, and there ain't no widder in the deal."

The cashier's jaw dropped. "I — I —" she began; but I was at her elbow.

"'With-or-without-dower,' — 'widder without dower,'" I mimicked. Down went her head onto the desk, and I stuffed my handkerchief into my mouth.

Uncle Rob saw the point right off, and I never in my life saw any one make such a heroic effort not to laugh. I thought for a moment that it would come out in spite of all he could do; but I hoped it would n't; for the man was so uncomfortable already. Uncle Rob closed his eyes for just a second, — it was n't more than a mere

blink, and then he held out his hand for the package and smiled just as naturally as could be. "I 'm sorry I made a mistake," he said, "I 'll fix it," and he went back to the drawer and got out another form just like the one in the roll, and wrapped it up and handed it to him. "You 'll find that one is all right," he said, "I 'm sorry you had to come back."

The flushed look went out of the man's face and he began to breathe easier. "Oh, that 's all right," he said; "I did n't mind coming back; but of course I did n't want the wrong thing."

"Of course not," said Uncle Rob, and the man went out of the door, satisfied.

After the high-school girl was gone, a lot of college students came in, and Uncle Rob got their books for them without any trouble, except when one of them asked for a call-book, and he handed out a book on etiquette instead of on quadrille figures; — but the other fellow got laughed at worse than Uncle Rob did; — and then Mr. Wright came in.

Mr. Wright is an old man who has a little store on the other side of the river, and he comes in every Saturday, with a basket on his arm, to stock

up, and he always has to have Dad wait on him. As soon as I saw him coming, I skipped back to the office for Dad, and found him talking violins with Judge Shelby. Dad does n't know anything about violins, and Judge Shelby does, and so they certainly do have great arguments. Dad has n't any sense of humor, anyway.

Well, that day, when I saw Judge Shelby there, I knew it was going to be a long pull and a strong pull to get Dad out to look after Mr. Wright. I told him who was there, though, and he said, "Yes, in a minute," and I went back.

In ten minutes Mr. Wright began to get nervous, and I went again and said: — "Dad, Mr. Wright is in a hurry."

"Yes, in a minute," said Dad, — and was deep in the argument again.

I went out, and Uncle Rob and I tried to interest the old gentleman for another ten minutes, — then I went to the office again.

"Yes, in a minute," said Dad, not changing his voice from the level of his argument with Judge Shelby.

I went and asked Mr. Wright if I could n't show him some of the things he wanted, because

Dad was "busy." He did n't like it much; but said he wanted to see some pop-guns.

I took him back to the toy section and got out some long, striped wooden ones with a cork in one end and a sort of a piston in the other. He said those would do all right; but of course I did n't know the trade-price on them, and so I went to the office with one.

Dad was deeper than ever in the argument. I held up the pop-gun and said: — "How much, to Mr. Wright?"

Dad did n't stop talking to Judge Shelby; but he reached out and took the gun, and pulled the cork out and looked into the hole, and then put it back, shoved the stick up and down a few times, and then handed it back and went on talking to Judge Shelby.

I stood and waited for a while, and then I heard Mr. Wright shuffling outside of the door, and I held it out again: — "Mr. Wright wants to know how much for a dozen."

Dad took it again, stopped talking, and turned it over and over in his hand and tried the stick again. "Yes," he said, "a violin may have a good tone, Judge Shelby, even if the neck is n't —"

"Dad," I said, "Mr. Wright wants to know how much those pop-guns are."

Dad stopped and looked at me and at the pop-gun, and then he began to get to his feet. Mr. Wright and Uncle Rob had gradually worked over to the office and were standing just outside of the door. "Yes," went on Dad, "a neck like that does n't hinder the tone; but it won't hold, — the strings will always be running down." He was getting toward the door, with the pop-gun in his hand, and his voice grew bigger and more emphatic as he came to the wind-up; "I tell you, Judge Shelby, a thing like that will never, never be a success!" He reached the door and finished his opinion at the same moment; and then he sort of waked up, and almost ran over Mr. Wright; and then his business smile suddenly came into his face, and he held out his hand.

"Good-morning, Mr. Pop-gun," he said.

And then Uncle Rob and I disgraced ourselves. I dived into the office, and Uncle Rob followed, and Dad looked after us with surprise and disapproval, and then turned to the old gentleman:— "I beg your pardon, I should have said Mr. Wright," — and neither he nor Mr. Wright nor

Judge Shelby, so much as cracked a smile. And afterwards, when he was calling me down for laughing, and I kept on giggling every time I thought of it, he said; "Well, *I* don't see anything funny about that, I merely misspoke, that was all." I told you he had no sense of humor.

By and by Dad went to dinner, and Uncle Rob and I waited for him to come back before going to ours. The cashier got back first, and just behind her, came an old lady. The old lady went up to Uncle Rob, and he said, "Yes, madam," and turned around and went to looking in one of the shelves of books. He looked and looked, and by and by I said to the cashier, "What do you suppose he 's looking for among those dialogue books and things?"

"I-d'know," she said.

Uncle Rob kept on looking, and then after a while he seemed to get discouraged, and he came over to where we were. "Where do you keep the hen books?" he asked.

"The wh-what?" I asked.

"The hen books," he said, confidently.

"Well, what 's a hen book?" said I.

"Why, I suppose it 's a book about raising

hens. You said a horse book was one about raising horses."

"We have n't got any," I said.

The cashier got down from her stool and walked over behind the show-case where the old lady was standing, and Uncle Rob and I sidled over near them. The cashier is awfully little, not so tall as Bess, and her shoulders were hardly on a level with the top of the show-case; but she smiled up at the old lady. "What-was-it-you-wanted?" she asked.

"A hemn book, — Gospel Hemns and Sacred Songs."

Uncle Rob and I ducked into the office again. "A *hen* book!" I gasped, holding my sides and rocking in the desk-chair.

Uncle Rob clasped his hands and rolled his eyes. "Ye gods! Suppose I 'd handed her a book on chicken farming!"

The cashier wrapped up the book and when the old lady had gone out, she went back to put away the stock that was left out; and just then a young man came in. We could see him through the glass partition of the office; but we did n't dare to go out just then, because we had n't got through

laughing. The man wore eye-glasses and looked like a drummer, and he walked up to the show-case where Miss Weed was gathering up the books, and smiled down at her, in such a pleased way.

"Is your papa in, dear?" he asked.

Miss Weed sort of gasped and looked up at him, and then a funny little shine came into her eyes. "No, sir," she said, kind of shyly.

"And are you waiting on customers all by yourself?" he asked in over-affected astonishment.

"Yes, sir," said Miss Weed.

"My, my! — and how old are you?"

"Twenty-seven, sir," said Miss Weed, in her natural voice.

The man's mouth positively fell open. "I — I beg your pardon, Miss, — I certainly do — I had no idea — " and just then Dad hove in sight, and we grabbed our hats and made for the open air.

After dinner things went along quite smoothly; only they did get one joke on me. Dad was upstairs taking an order for some picture frames, when a tall German came in and asked for him. I said that he would be down in a few minutes, and so the man decided to wait, and began strolling

about the store and looking at things. He 'd been in before, and knew who I was, and in a little while he came over to where I was standing, by the cashier's desk, and asked, in a business-like tone: — "Haf you any brooders?"

"Any what?" I said.

"Brooders, — haf you any brooders?"

I was quite sure that I was n't understanding him, and so I turned to Miss Weed. "Have we?" I asked.

"What is it?" asked Miss Weed.

I did n't want to try to say it, and so I turned to the man, for him to say it again.

He looked surprised. "I ask the young man if he haf any brooders," he said, "und he ask you!"

Miss Weed thought for a minute, and then she shook her head. "I don't know," she said; "but I don't think so."

I did n't want to miss a sale by not knowing the stock, and so I looked pleasant and said, "I 'll ask Dad when he comes down; he 'll be here in just a minute."

"Mine Gott in Himmel!" said the man, pounding on the counter and talking to the atmosphere, "I ask the young man if he haf any brooders —

any brooders or sisters — und he say he not know! — und he ask the lady, und she say she not know! — und den he say he vill ask his fader, ven he come! Mine Gott! Mine Gott!"

Dad explained things when he came down, though. He said that probably I had not understood what Mr. Burger said.

Uncle Rob got on finely all the afternoon, only he kept on having experiences. Once an old woman came in and asked to see some birthday cards. He led the way to the case and spread them out before her. She looked for a long time, and by and by she said,

"You see, my granddaughter got one here last week, to take to a birthday party, and she lost it. It cost fifteen cents, — which are your fifteen-cent ones?"

Uncle Rob sorted some out, and she kept on talking while she looked them over: — "Yes, and I told her I 'd come in and get her another one. The party ain't till Monday night. Don't you think this is a right pretty one?"

"Yes," said Uncle Rob, "I think that is especially nice."

"I guess that 'll do, then. Will you give me

an envelope for it? She said the other one had an envelope."

He put it in an envelope and then wrapped some paper around it and held it out to her. She took it and said "Thank you," and started for the door.

"Well — h-m — you — " began Uncle Rob.

"What say?" said the old lady, turning around.

Uncle Rob smiled cheerfully. "You forgot to pay me for it," he said.

"Pay you for it!" said the old lady, looking astonished; "Why, I told you my granddaughter lost the one she got."

"But did she lose it here in the store?"

"No, she said it was in her basket when she got into the buck-board; but the cover blowed off on the way home, and the card must of blowed out."

Uncle Rob looked at her.

"I told her I was sure you 'd make it all right," said the old lady.

Uncle Rob opened his mouth — and then he shut it again. "Yes 'm," he said, at last, "that is all right; we 're glad of the opportunity to make it up to you."

"I thought you would be," and the old lady trotted out of the store.

Uncle Rob reached into his pocket and fished out a nickel and a dime and laid them on the cash-desk. "It 's worth it," he said; "I would n't disturb her confidence for twice that; and besides, I could never have made her understand in a thousand years. Is every day like this, Chet?"

"No," I said; "but Saturday always brings a lot of this sort of thing, and we 've got a little more than usual to-day, that 's all."

About four o'clock a young woman came in. Uncle Rob had been having good luck for about an hour, and had begun to think that he was the real thing in clerks; and so when she asked for note paper, he gave a glance at me, as much as to say: "Watch me," and began taking down boxes. "Now here 's some in octavo size, sea-shell tint," he said.

"It is n't large enough," said the young woman.

"Well, here 's the same thing in commercial size. This has the long envelope, you see."

"No, I want it white," said the young woman.

Out came a box of white.

"No," she shook her head and frowned, "that is n't the kind. I want it striped."

"Oh!" said Uncle Rob, and brought out some ruled paper.

"No," she said, "that is n't the kind either, — it 's larger than that."

"Here 's letter size," said Uncle Rob; "but you said *note* paper."

"Well, that 's what I want," said the young woman; "have n't you got any note paper?"

Uncle Rob looked at the clutter of boxes and loose sheets, and than at her. "Don't any of these suit you, madam?" he asked.

"No, they are n't what I want at all, — I want it bigger."

Uncle Rob did n't say a word; but went to a drawer and brought out a sheet of foolscap.

"No," she said, "I told you I wanted it striped."

Uncle Rob pointed to the ruling.

"No, not that kind of stripes."

"Oh!" suddenly a light broke over Uncle Rob's face and he went back to the drawer and brought out, with an air of triumph, a sheet of legal-cap with a red line down the left-hand margin.

But the woman shook her head. "No," she said, "that is n't it, at all."

"What did you intend to use it for?" asked Uncle Rob, patiently.

"Why, to write notes on, of course. I said note paper, did n't I? — just ordinary note paper!"

Uncle Rob stood and looked at her helplessly, and just then Dad came along and she saw him. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "here 's Mr. Williams! Mr. Williams, I 'm having such a time! I came in to get some note paper, — I 'm copying some music, you know, — and your clerk does n't seem to know anything about it."

Dad looked at Uncle Rob and at the scattered paper and boxes. "The music paper is in that drawer right behind you, Robert," he said; "Could n't you find it? Chester, why did n't you tell him where it was?"

I started to speak; but Uncle Rob gave me a little glance, and I shut up; and he got out the paper and wrapped it, and handed it to her as pleasantly as could be.

Dad walked to the door with her; and we heard her say: - "Thank you so much, Mr. Williams. It must be an awful bother, breaking in new help."

Dad was still at the door talking to her, when Dan Burns drove up to the curb and called something to Dad, and Dad turned and called down the store: — "Robert, get Mr. Burns — there — those right in front of you, in that case, — hurry, his horses won't stand, — why, right there in that case, can't you see? — Why, it 's right under your eyes — hurry — "

"But what — ?" Uncle Rob had the case open and was groping wildly among fifty different things from fish-hooks to ink erasers; and Dad kept on calling, and never let up for a second: —

"Hurry, Robert, those horses won't stand, I told you! Why, what 's the matter, it 's right under your hands!" and Dad came down the store, talking all the way. "Can't you find it when it 's right square in front of you? Number sixteen! Oh, never mind, I 'll get it myself!" and he came 'round behind the counter and grabbed a box of rubber bands and rushed out of the store with it.

Uncle Rob stood and looked after him. "He got it, did n't he?" he asked, weakly, and just then Dad came back to the door where the young woman was still standing; and she said something

about "stupid," and Dad shook his head in a discouraged way.

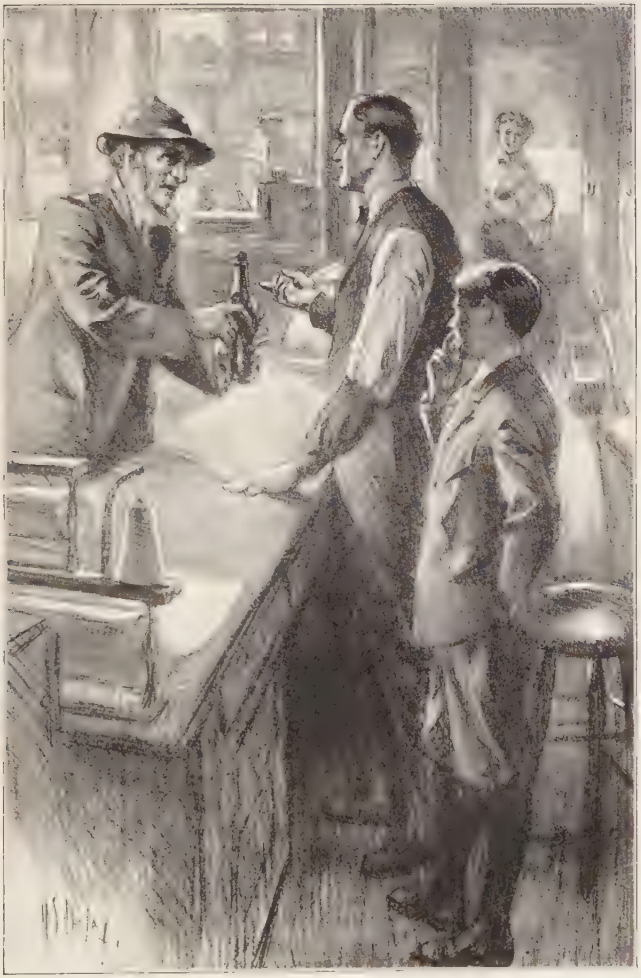
"Right before his eyes, too!" he said.

Uncle Rob put his hand to his head. "I guess that 's going some! Do you suppose he thought he 'd told me what he wanted?"

"He did n't think at all," I said. "*He* knew what Burns wanted, was n't that enough? Why did n't you get it for him?"

Uncle Rob shook his head. "This is strenuous!" he said; "I was a fairly tall man when I came down this morning; but the next person who comes in will have to stand on tiptoe and look over the counter, and say: — 'Is your papa here, sonny?'"

Miss Weed giggled; and Dad stopped on his way back to the office. "You boys had better straighten things up a little before closing time," he said; so we went to work. Presently Dad came back to check up some business with the cashier, and just then a man went past the door, with a gait like an express train, then he glanced in at the window, wheeled, and came into the store on a dog-trot. He came up to the counter and slammed down a big bottle.



"I want some Parker's floor polish and a pint—"

"I want some Parker's floor-polish and a pint of linseed — "

Uncle Rob interrupted him. "We don't keep floor-polish," he said; "This is a book store."

The man glanced around. "Oh, I thought it was the drug store," he said, and grabbed up his bottle and made for the door.

"There," I said, "he 's turned the wrong way!" The drug store is a block below here; but the front is just like ours; — that 's how he made the mistake. Oh, now he 's on the right track," for he came by again, going two steps at a jump, and the old bottle swinging ahead of him; then suddenly he caught a glimpse of the window, stopped, whirled and rushed in and up to Uncle Rob and slammed the bottle down on the counter.

"I want some Parker's floor-polish and a pint — "

"We don't keep floor-polish. This is a book store," said Uncle Rob, in exactly the same tone that he had used before.

The man started, and looked at him, and then grabbed the bottle and dashed out of the store.

"Guess he thinks the drug store closes at six," said Uncle Rob; and we went to the other side

of the store to take care of some more stuff, and Uncle Rob was holding up a cut glass carafe, when some one darted into the store and rushed up to us, holding out a bottle; then suddenly he noticed Uncle Rob's face, gave one look around and said,

"Well, I 'll — !" and dashed out again.

"What does that man want?" called Dad.

"Parker's floor-polish and a pint of linseed oil," said Uncle Rob, cheerfully.

"Why don't you tell him we don't keep floor-polish?'"

"I did," said Uncle Rob; and just then the man loomed up in the door-way again, halted, gave one look around; and then suddenly the air got blue, and he dashed off down the street.

Dad went to the door and looked after him. "I presume he thought this was a drug store," he said.

CHAPTER XI

UNCLE ROB VISITS MY BROWN STUDY

I DID N'T see much of Uncle Rob for several weeks. He was busy at the store, and I had to study evenings. I had tried to read some in the Christian Science text-book; but I could n't seem to get the hang of it; and besides I'd been having a cold, and felt bum.

One Sunday afternoon he came over and sat down on the upper step of the veranda and leaned back against the pillar, just as he had that first evening. "How 's everything, Chet?" he said.

I kicked against the railing.

"Is that the way you feel?" he asked.

"It sure is," I said.

"Why don't you take something for it?"

"Take something for it! I 've done nothing but fight off mustard plasters and flaxseed tea and hot lemonade, for three weeks; — they 're shoved at me every time I put my nose in the door; and every time I bark on the street, somebody rushes up with a new dose or the makin's of one; or puts in twenty-seven minutes telling about the

cold that his cousin's grandmother's second husband died of. When I saw you coming, I thought: 'Well, here 's one that won't say "take something,"' — and you start right in with it, first thing, just like the rest."

Uncle Rob drummed his fingers on the floor beside him. "I was n't going to suggest any of those things," he said.

"Oh, no! Every one knows something different. They 're all simply trying to rub it in."

"Why don't you give them something in return?"

"I feel like giving them a punch!"

"How would it be if you were to give them a kind thought, in recognition that they are trying to help you, as well as they know how?"

"Well, they are n't succeeding, I can tell them that."

"You are sort of using them in lieu of the mustard plaster that you refused, are n't you?"

"What?"

"Well, you 're using them for purposes of irritation. It 's like a mustard plaster that has mustard on one side and dry, soft flannel on the other; one side stings you, and the other side

just keeps you warm, and you can turn toward you whichever you choose, and you choose the mustard, not because you think it will do you any good, but because you 'feel that way.'"

I did n't say anything for a minute, and then, — "What were you going to suggest for me to 'take'?"

"A good dose of common sense."

I kicked the railing again.

"What have you been doing for that cold, Chet?"

"Using Christian Science," I said, doggedly.

"And how is it working?"

"I never had one hold on so in my life."

"Tell me about it."

"There 's nothing to tell. I just made up my mind to try Christian Science; and I 've stuck to it. I told myself that I would n't take a dose of medicine or do one solitary thing, and I have n't. The cold is better now, for it has just about worn itself out, but it pretty near wore me out in the process. I 've got all I want of that sort of 'healing.'"

"So you used Christian Science," said Uncle Rob, looking at me steadily.

"I did. I gave it a fair trial, — and it did n't work."

"Did you see your practitioner often?"

"Practitioner? Why, I did n't have a practitioner."

"But you have read the text-book?"

"Only a little, — I can't understand it. No, I just thought I 'd see what I could do with Christian Science myself."

"Well, you say you 'used it'; *how* did you use it?"

"Why, I told you; — I did n't take any medicine or do anything."

"And was that all?"

"Yes, only I tried to think I did n't have a cold."

"And you call that using Christian Science?"

"Yes. What do you call it?"

"Well, if you want my honest opinion, I should call it a perfectly idiotic proceeding."

The front legs of my chair came down with a thud. "Is n't that what *you* do?" I said; and it sounded pointedly accusing, the way I said it.

"Not by a long chalk," said Uncle Rob. "Now, look here, Chet, suppose you had been living on an entire meat diet, nothing else but meat,

mind you, and you should decide to become a vegetarian, and should begin by recognizing the very important point that you must stop eating meat. Therefore you stop. Now suppose that, in stopping the meat, you entirely lost sight of the fact that a very necessary feature in being a vegetarian, is that one must eat vegetables. You did n't take that into consideration, — you simply stopped eating meat; and as you had been eating nothing else, and now substituted nothing, you ate nothing whatever. You merely kept telling yourself that vegetarians declared that meat was n't necessary, and that they appeared to be healthy; and you went on, from day to day, growing hungrier and hungrier, and thinner and thinner, and stating to all inquirers that you were testing vegetarianism to see what was in it. It would n't take you very long to come to the conclusion that vegetarianism was n't practicable, — that you, at least, could n't get along without meat; and you would tell your friends that you had tested the theory to your sorrow, that there was nothing in it; and then you would return to your meat diet, sadder and not much wiser, but perfectly sure that vegetarianism is a mistake,

for you are convinced that you would have starved to death if you had kept it up.

"Now, would that be giving the vegetarian theory a fair show? Would n't you really be slandering it, and misleading those who did n't understand exactly your method of testing it?"

"You 're right," I said.

"And is n't that exactly the sort of a test that you have just given Christian Science? The foundation of your treatment was negative, — *not* to take medicine. A continuous negative never yet brought a positive result, its ultimate is nothing. Your foundation must be positive, an accepted fact; and your method must contain more positives than negatives, — more knowledge of truth than denial of error, — if you would realize a positive result. Suppose you learned a multiplication table like this: —

Five times one are n't seven,
Five times two are n't sixteen,
Five times three are n't ninety-nine,

What sort of good would you get out of that, even if you kept at it until doomsday, and rang in twenty-seven million variations? That you took no medicine no more argued that you were

using Christian Science than that you were using osteopathy or voodoo practices. What sort of a trial do you think you gave it, anyhow?"

I tipped my chair back again. "It looks to me," I said, "as if you had eliminated Christian Science from my case."

"There was n't any to eliminate," said Uncle Rob. "And I suppose you 've been telling everybody that you 've been using it all this time, — and then coughing for them!"

"Pretty near that, — I 've been so mad about it for the last few days."

"Well, then, it 's up to you to set them straight. You 've no more business to let any one keep on thinking that, — any one that you 've told, — than as if it were some *person* that you had told something untrue about; because you were mistaken."

"But what am I to say?"

"Say whatever common sense and your idea of fairness dictate. If you want to square an injury that you have done, you can always find a way to do it."

Of course I had n't any argument; for he had me dead to rights. "All O. K.," I said. "I 'll

square it. And now I suppose I 'll have to give the thing a real trial some time."

"That 's for you to decide," said Uncle Rob.

"No, it is n't," I said. "You 've spoiled the one that I was tying to, by showing that it was n't one at all; and I 've simply *got* to get my bearings on the subject; because it will sit on the edge of the shelf in my brown study, and make eyes at me, until I have got it ticketed or pitched it out. Here 's one thing I can't understand, though, — if the healing comes from God, why is n't it free? I don't see how the practitioners can think it 's right to charge for it."

"Well, I 'll tell you one reason," said Uncle Rob. "It happens that the practitioners have n't yet outgrown the necessity of eating food and wearing clothes and having roofs over their heads! When a person gives up whatever work he is doing to earn a living, and takes up the study and practice of Christian Science, can you tell me how he is going to get food and clothing and pay his rent, if he does n't charge anything for the time he gives to his patients?"

I surely could n't.

"No one thinks that a minister or a doctor

ought to give his time and his work for nothing. If you can make any suggestions as to how the practitioners can give all of their time, free of charge, and still be fed and clothed and housed, I 'm mighty sure that they would be glad to hear from you on the subject."

I laughed. "You poke such big holes in my arguments that everything leaks out," I said.

"And there 's another thing," went on Uncle Rob. "A gift, — as of time and work in this case, — given without charge, and accepted as a *right*, not as a favor (for that seems to be your argument), has little value. It has cost no effort — it calls forth no gratitude — it makes little impression — it is a small matter. Then, if it fail, there seems to be little lost, and therefore much of the effect of the treatment is forfeited through the indifference of the patient. His apathy is a bar to the good which an active, receptive attitude might make an opening for. But let him feel that he has something at stake, and that attitude changes at once, and he becomes eager and interested and ready to assimilate what is given to him. Is n't it so in everything? Don't you suppose that the fellow who is working his

way through college, studies harder and more eagerly than the average student whose parents are paying his bills? It 's natural. To get good, of any kind, we have to be *alive* to it; — a limp hand — or mental attitude — never grasps anything. Is n't it so?"

"Yes," I said.

"And there 's still another point," said Uncle Rob; "if this time and work were given to all who came, without charge of any kind, then the mere curiosity-seeker, the searcher after new experiences, the chronic sponge, the something-for-nothing fellow, all of these would so fill up the time of the practitioners, that the real sufferer, the earnest seeker, and the honest investigator, would be crowded out; for there could n't be enough practitioners found to do the work."

Uncle Rob waited for me to say something, but there was n't anything more to say about that, and so I kept quiet. There 's one good thing about me, — when I 've slumped through in an argument, I don't keep on struggling and spitting up bubbles with nothing in 'em but air! I was through with the financial side of it.

I kicked the railing for a while longer, then I

pulled the text-book out of my pocket and began running my thumb back and forth across the edges of the leaves.

"Well?" said Uncle Rob.

"Too dense for me," I said.

"Can't you understand it?"

"No, — and no one else can, either."

"That 's rather a broad statement, is n't it?" said Uncle Rob. "I know a very large number of people who say that they understand it."

"Well, they just say it to make people think they know a lot; or because they think that if they believe it, or just swallow it and try to think they understand it, they 'll get health, wealth, and happiness in some mysterious sort of a way, they dont' know how. I don't believe there 's anything to understand *in* it; — it 's just a jumble of ideas that don't mean anything; - and it contradicts itself, and uses words in a way that you don't expect to have them used." I don't know exactly why it should irritate me because other people liked the book, when I did n't have to, if I did n't want to; — but it did, just the same.

Uncle Rob looked at me soberly. "Do you really believe all that, Chester?" he asked.

"Yep. I've tried to read it, — and it simply can't be understood."

A funny little smile came around the corners of his mouth. "Chester," he said, "don't you think that you are just the least bit inclined to be egotistical in that statement of yours? You say that *you* can't understand it, and that, therefore, no one else can; — and when thousands and thousands of the most intellectual men and women in the world say that they understand it, and use it, and that it is as practical and clear and demonstrable as mathematics. You say that because it is n't clear to *you*, they must all be lying."

I felt my face flush.

"Suppose that you had read the book, looking for things you could n't understand, for twenty years, and had found plenty of them, would that be any sign that other people who had looked for things that they *could* understand, and utilize, and who said they had found them, must be falsifying? Is your intellect so colossal that what you can't seem to grasp, must necessarily be a mere jumble of words containing no meaning whatever? You might be generous enough to give these other people credit for an ordinary amount of intelli-

gence and honesty; or at least, you ought to give some time to examining into the things that they are doing every day to prove that they do understand, before you set them down as liars, frauds, or superstitious puppets."

Uncle Rob was very much in earnest, and I did n't have anything to say, — so I kicked the railing again.

Suddenly Uncle Rob smiled. "You make me think," he said, "of the man who was calling a certain theory ridiculous, absurd, and without foundation. 'But how do you refute it?' asked his friend. 'This way!' and he kicked against a great boulder by the roadside. He did n't joggle or mar the boulder, — but he hurt his toe!"

I did n't so much as grin.

"Now see here, Chester," he went on, "suppose you take that book and look in it for some things that you *can* understand, instead of looking for trouble. Everything that you do understand, will prove a clue to something that you thought you did n't; and if you take it that way, you 'll find that as each statement unravels before your eyes, it shows its connection with some other statement which had seemed confused; and by and by you

will find that the whole book stretches, a smooth, perfect skein before you, instead of an unmeaning tangle of twists and snarls, as you seem to see it now. It is a flawless, continuous thread, when you have made sufficient effort to grasp the right end, and follow it through its length. That is what other people have done; — are n't you capable of doing it?"

I ran the leaves of the book through my fingers. I knew that, in a way, Uncle Rob was right about my looking for trouble; that is, I did n't exactly look for it, but when I found something that seemed unreasonable or contradictory, I pounced upon it and wished that Bess was there so that I could show her how absurd it was. I could see, too, that it was mighty conceited for me to say that nobody understood it, just because I did n't. Someway I did n't feel very proud of myself.

"What 's the main difficulty?" asked Uncle Rob.

"Contradictory."

"How?"

"Says there is no such thing as sickness, — and then says how to cure it. It can't consistently tell how to cure it, when it says there is n't any."

Uncle Rob positively grinned. "Chet," he said, "suppose some fellow you know, should come to you and say: — 'Gee, but I had a bad night last night! There were purple dragons with pink wings chasing me until daylight!' and you should say: — 'Well, you stop eating mince pie the last thing before you go to bed, and you won't see any more purple dragons. Just try it.'"

"Now suppose some one else should come to you in a few days and say: — 'I understand that you believe that there are really such things as purple dragons with pink wings'; and when you denied it, he 'd say: — 'Well, did n't you tell that other fellow how to get rid of them?' and you 'd have to admit that you did; and then he would say: — 'Well, then you are contradicting yourself; for how could you, consistently, tell him how to get rid of them, if you did n't believe that there were any to get rid of?' Now, what would you say to him in a case like that?"

"There would n't be any use in saying anything to a fellow who used his mind in that sort of a way, — and," I added, "I 'm that fellow."

Uncle Rob laughed. "It 's different when you get hold of the right end, is n't it?" he said.

"You were telling the other man how to cure a bad dream, — and that 's what the book tells us. What 's your next difficulty?"

"Well, the words don't always mean what you expect them to."

"But does n't the dictionary support the use of them?"

"Yes," I admitted, for I had looked up words that did n't seem to 'belong,' and found there was n't any mistake.

"Now see here," said Uncle Rob, "You've probably noticed that this book sets forth things that are 'different.' Our language has grown up to fit the uses of a very material life; it has grown out of a material sense of surroundings; — and so, when these very different ideas were to be expressed, it must have been almost impossible to find words to make them clear. What sort of a time would a native of the hottest part of Africa have, in trying to tell his tribe, in their own language, about a visit to the polar regions? Don't you think he 'd have to do a lot of skirmishing to find means of description? — and don't you think it would make him 'tired' if some of them said

that he perverted words and said things that did n't mean anything?"

I saw the difficulties and felt a sudden sympathy for the fellow with the Greenland story. It would n't be any snap, — and then to have the people who did n't have to listen to him unless they wanted to, kick about his vocabulary,— that certainly would be piling it on pretty thick! I had n't any remarks to make.

"Anything more?" asked Uncle Rob.

"Well," I said, bound to get as many of my mountains down to mole-hills as possible, "there 's another thing that puzzles me. How can God be of 'too pure sight to behold evil'? If He knows everything, how can He help knowing evil?"

"But that 's from the Bible," said Uncle Rob.

"I know it," I said; "but I never thought, before, that a person was expected to believe it."

"I think I 'll tell you a story," said Uncle Rob. "It is n't new, and I don't know just where it came from originally; but it is to the point. In the first place, though, you will admit that evil is lack of good, won't you?"

"Certainly."

"And you can understand God and Infinite Good as being synonymous, can't you?"

"Yes."

"And darkness is lack of light, is n't it?"

"Sure."

"Well, here 's the story: —

"Once upon a time there was a deep, dark cave; and away down in this cave, away from the light, there lay a man. And he was very miserable. And all day — and all day — he lay there and moaned and cried because of the dreadful darkness that surrounded him upon all sides. It was absolute blackness, without a ray of light.

"And one day, while he cried, the sun, shining high up in the heavens, heard him and called down to him and asked what grieved him so, and why he cried and groaned.

"'T is this terrible darkness!' moaned the man. 'I am surrounded and engulfed in blackness. It is dreadful, horrible!'

"'But,' said the sun, 'what *is* darkness?'

"'Why, that I cannot explain to you,' said the man. 'I have no words to portray it to you; but it is the most fearful thing in all the world.'

"'But what is it like?' asked the sun.

"The man tried to describe it; but to no purpose; for he had no words which could make the glorious, brilliant sun, — the very source of light — understand what such a thing as darkness could be, — and so at last he said,

"'Well, if you so much wish to know what this dreadful darkness is, come down into my cave and see it for yourself. It will not take you long to understand it then, I 'll warrant. Come down, I say, and see it for yourself.'

"Now the sun very much wished to know what this fearsome thing called darkness, might be; so he came down and went and peeped into the cave where lay the man; but all that he saw was light — brilliant, shining light, covering everything.

"'Where is your darkness?' he cried to the man. 'I see none of it.'

"'No, it is gone,' said the man. 'Neither do I see it now.'

"'But where has it gone?' asked the sun.

"'Back, farther back into the cave,' said the man.

"So the sun went back — and back — into the depths of the cave, peering into all of the chinks

and crannies, until he came to the hard, back wall and could go no farther; — but he had found no darkness.

"'Come, show me your darkness!' he called to the man. 'Where is it? It has had no chance to escape. Where can it be?'

"But the man could only shake his head. 'I cannot tell you,' he said.

"And so the sun went back up into the sky, his curiosity unsatisfied; for he had found no shade or shadow of darkness, not in all his search."

I sat still. I was n't kicking the railing now. "I see," I said, slowly. "The sun could never see or know darkness, because it stops *being*, whenever he comes."

"Yes," said Uncle Rob, "and evil stops *being*, wherever God is."

"Yes," I said.

"And where is God, Infinite Mind, Infinite Good, — all the time?"

"Everywhere." Then I was quiet. I felt as if something big had suddenly come into my life, and I did n't want to talk.

We sat there for a long time, until Mother came out and asked if we had gone to sleep; and then

Uncle Rob got up and said he must go. I walked across the lawn with him.

"Anything more, Chet?" he asked, as we came to the hedge between the houses.

"One," I said.

"What is it?"

I was holding the book tightly in my hands. "Do you really believe that this book is inspired?" I asked, in a very low voice.

Uncle Rob looked at me. "Just what do you mean by 'inspired'?" he asked. "Tell me exactly the sort of a picture that the word brings to you."

I thought for a moment. "Well," I said, "I supposed it meant that the book was dictated, word for word, to the writer, by God."

"And what sort of a God have you in mind?"

I hesitated. I began to see that my thinking had been a lot more inconsistent, even, than I had accused the book of being; but I answered honestly. "Well," I said, "the picture in my mind was of a great big person, looking a good deal like the Michael Angelo statue of Moses, - only immensely bigger; and I thought it meant that he sat there and said what to write."

Uncle Rob was still looking at me. "Chester," he said, "how old are you?"

"Nearly fourteen."

"Well, you talk as if you were about six! Is that really the sort of a picture that the word 'inspired' brings to your mind; — a man-god, dictating sentences?"

"But I did n't believe it!"

"But the idea of your supposing that *any* one believed it! No wonder you were stumped when you thought you saw so many intelligent people apparently swallowing that sort of thing! Now listen. Is n't it stated, over and over and over again, that God is Infinite Mind and incorporeal? Have n't you read it and read it and read it?"

"Yes."

"Then where on earth do you get your mental picture of a God in man's image? — speaking to material ears — in a human voice — in the English language?"

I could only shake my head.

"Well now here, you have admitted that God is Infinite Mind; then Infinite Mind must be Truth. Can you see it any other way?"

"No."

"And man expresses, or shows forth that Mind. Now if the word 'inspire' means 'to infuse into,' as the dictionary gives it, then, to be 'inspired by God' is to have Truth come into one's consciousness. Is n't that clear?"

"Yes."

"Well then, to say that book is inspired, is to say that Truth is expressed, or expresses Itself, in the book, and through the author. Is there anything weird, or mysterious, or unbelievable in that? Is there anything in it to prevent the author from consistently adding to the book, as she grasps more and more of the facts in this Mind? There is nothing supernatural; but there is shown a marvellous clearness of understanding which allowed the author to obtain this tremendous insight into the realities of Life, the Life which is God. It meant study and work greater than you and I can realize; and it meant revelation, — not in any supernatural sense, but in that because of the author's understanding, the truth was revealed through her, as light is revealed through a clear glass window, — while begrimed ones only shut it in; and the Light which is shining out through this clear glass, is lighting the path for us all. It is n't that

the Light is kinder to the keeper of that window than to the keepers of the begrimed ones, but only that in this case the soil of material things has been washed away, and the glory beyond is streaming through."

CHAPTER XII

1944 IUKA AVENUE

BOB STEVENS walked part way home from school with me the next afternoon. "What are you taking algebra for?" he asked, snapping his thumb and finger against my book.

"Why, because I like it; — and then it 's necessary for geometry, and that sort of thing. You know I 'm going to be a civil engineer."

"Algebra has n't any sense to it," said Bob.

"Well, indeed it has," I said. "If you just use your thinking apparatus along with it, it 's just as plain and reasonable as can be."

Bob sniffed. "You think it sounds big to say you 're taking algebra; and of course you have to say you understand it. I don't believe that any one understands it; — it 's just a jumble of letters and figures that have n't a speck of meaning to them; — and it says one thing on one page, and then turns around and says something exactly opposite on the next one. I know, because I 've read it; — and it 's what some of the other boys say, too."

"Not the boys who are studying it and understand it."

"Some of them are studying it, and say it can't be understood. They say they did n't believe there was anything in it to start on, and they have n't wasted much time on it."

"Well, why don't you ask some of the boys who *have* put time on it?"

"Oh, they would n't want to back down and admit that there was nothing in it, after they had put in a lot of work on it."

I looked at Bob to find whether he was in earnest. I did n't see how any one could argue in that sort of a way. "But you have n't studied it, Bob," I said. "You 're not in a position to know anything about it."

"Well, I 've read enough of it," said Bob; "all I want to. Here," and he reached for my book, and opened it just anywhere; "here it says 'a = 10, b = 5'; now how can a letter equal a figure, tell me that? It 's all tommyrot."

"But it 's because you don't understand."

"And listen to this," he went on, "here on page twenty-seven it says 'a = 240,' and here on page thirty-two it says 'a = 17,' and back there it said

'a = 10.' Now how do you get around a thing like that? And it 's right here in plain sight in the same book; and yet you say the book has some sense to it! If it has, just explain that, — unless it 's a secret that only a few are allowed to know," and he snapped on the book cover again.

I only looked at him. How could I explain it to him when he did n't know the first thing about it, to begin with?

"You can't," he said, and tossed the book back to me. "It 's full of things like that," he added.

"But," I said, "when you study it, it 's all plain, and you find that it is n't contradictory at all."

"Well then, why don't you explain it?"

"I could n't make you understand, until you 've studied it."

"Oh!" said Bob, "you know such a lot more than I do, that you can't reach down to my level to make me understand?"

I was never so aggravated at Bob before in my life; and yet all the time I had the feeling as if all this had happened before, and I was living it over again; and it made me feel queer.

Bob went on, "What 's the use of me studying a thing that I can see at a glance has n't any rea-

son or sense to it, that I can't understand, and that nobody else does or can?"

"But think of the teachers, and the mathematicians, and the students — "

"Oh, they like to talk," said Bob, tossing his head.

"Bob Stevens, — " I began, — and then suddenly it came over me what was familiar about the conversation, and I sort of gasped.

"Well?" said Bob.

I laughed. "Think what you want to about algebra," I said. "It 's none of my affair what you think, if you are satisfied. It is n't up to me to make you change your mind, if your own ideas suit *you*, and get you anywhere."

Bob looked surprised and disappointed.

"And it certainly does n't make any difference to you, what I think, so long as I mind my own business and don't thrust my views upon you."

Bob scuffed his feet in the fallen leaves. "I hate to see you gulled," he said. "It makes me mad to see you waste your time on something that is n't good for anything."

"Don't you worry about me," I said. "You look after Bob Stevens, and I 'll see what I can do

toward bringing up Chester Williams right; — he 's all I can manage just at present, — unless somebody really wants a lift that I can give him."

Bob laughed, and the air cleared up some. I sat down on the curb and pulled out my compasses. Mother had been showing me something about geometry, evenings, so I knew some little, easy problems. "Come on, Bob," I said, "and see the way my compasses work." He thought I 'd given up the argument and was trying to change the subject, so he came and sat down beside me.

I got out some paper and drew some circles and things, and he got awfully interested; and then I started in on a little problem, but I did n't letter the lines. He 's got a mighty sharp mind, and he followed what I was trying to do, just as easy as could be, at first; but by and by he got mixed up as to which line I meant, and so I marked one of them *x*, and another *y*, and then it went easier, and he got more and more interested.

Then I started another and marked the lines with the same letters, and we worked that one out.

"Gee!" he said, "I 'd like a set like that. Let 's see if I can work one of those puzzles."

I gave him the figures and he worked it out fine, and when he got through, he said, putting his pencil on a line, "*x* equals 78."

"Sure that 's right?" I asked.

"Of course it is! It 's perfectly plain. I can prove it, too."

But I put my pencil on the one we 'd worked just before. "This says '*x* equals 90,'" I said.

"Well, but that — " began Bob; and then suddenly he stopped and looked at me as if he was going to chew me all up, and then — he laughed.

"Chet, you 're a fraud," he said. "You got me off my guard."

"It 's different when you understand it, is n't it?" I said.

"It sure is! And is this the sort of thing that algebra and geometry are?"

"Yep."

"And everything is just as clear and plain as these?" and he pointed to the paper.

"It is if you use your common sense."

"I 'm a fool," said Bob.

"I 'm with you," said I, with conviction, and we separated at the corner.

When I got to the house, Mother was sitting on the veranda. "Wait a minute, Chester," she said, "I have something I want to talk to you about."

I knew in a second what was coming. I 'd been keeping that other girl under lock and key in the coal-cellar of my "brown study," and to come home and find her as good as sitting on the front steps and grinning at me, made me warm around the collar. I stopped in my tracks. "What is it?" I said, keeping my teeth pretty close together.

Mother thought I did n't look very promising, and sort of hesitated.

"Is it about *her* coming here?" I asked, in a very level voice.

Mother looked surprised. "Yes. I did n't know that you — "

"Never mind," I said. I could feel the wrinkles getting tight around my eyes. "There 's no use in talking about it." Then I had a moment of hope. "There 's no way of getting around it, is there?"

"No," said Mother, very decidedly for her.

"Well, then, let 's drop it until the times comes."

"Very well," said Mother, her lips a little narrow.

I started into the house, then I stopped. I remembered what Bess had said about not wanting folks to tease her about it. "Say," I said, "I wish you 'd see that Dad or anybody does n't start to teasing Bess about it when she gets back. There is n't any reason why it should make any difference between her and me; but she does n't want to have it rubbed in, any more than I do," and I stumped off to my room.

On the table I found a letter from Bess. I had had only two or three short notes from her since the one from Chicago. The notes had come from Indianapolis and Washington; but here was a fine, long, type-written one, and it was from Chicago again; that meant that she would soon be home. I keeled over into my Morris chair and opened it. Here it is: —

"I 'm coming home next week. That 's to put you in a good humor to begin with.

"Next come adventures.

"I went from here to Indianapolis, and had my type-writer shipped by express; and when I unpacked it there, it was smashed to — well, it was the worst smashed up machine you ever saw. It was n't any use for me to get out my manicure

set again; for the carriage was broken square in two, and the ball-bearings were scattered all through the box, and the keys looked as if somebody had walked on them. It was n't the express company's fault; for it was all because the carriage was n't tied, and had just slammed around every time the box was pitched five or ten feet. It was n't my fault, either, for I tied the carriage before I left, and Uncle Fred said he 'd see to having the thing packed; — but I kind of think that he used it a time or two before he packed it, and then forgot to tie it up again; — but I 'll never tell him I think so.

"When Father got to Indianapolis, I took him, first thing, to see the wreck; and he said it looked as if I had been trying to use it for an automobile, and had had a collision. He did n't fuss about it, because there was n't any one there who was responsible. Father is sensible that way; — he does n't just fuss on principle, but only when it will do some good. He can go some then, though!

"So that afternoon we went down to see about having it fixed; and when he found what it would cost, — he whistled. 'But will it stand up then?' he asked.

"'Won't guarantee it to stand up one week, said the manager. 'We 'll fix it for you, but you can't tell a thing about a machine as old as this, when it once begins to go.'

"That did n't sound promising, and I began to see my trip acting like an engine when the wheels don't catch the rails. I felt my chin getting tight, and I went and looked out of the window at the fountain.

"Father stayed and chatted with the manager for a while, and then he came over to where I was and asked if I was ready to go.

"'Yes,' I said.

"'Where 's your smile?' asked Father.

"'I swallowed it,' I said. 'It 's right there,' and I put my hand on my throat. 'I can feel it! I never knew it was such an awfully big one!'

"Father laughed. 'When children get things stuck in their throats, we hold 'em up by the heels until it drops out.'

"Even that did n't bring it. Not because I was cross; but because I was afraid that if I let go of the corners of my mouth, they would go down, instead of up.

"'Well,' said Father, 'it looks to me as if I 'd

have to go fishing for it. We 'll go out and look up some tackle presently, but I 've got some bait here. Shall we go now, or would you like to look at your new type-writer first?'

"Well, that smile came up so quick that it left an empty feeling all over me!

"Oh, Chet, it 's the dandiest machine! And they had some of the characters changed, so as to give me just the things I wanted. Father said I ought to have two question marks and two exclamation points put on, because he was afraid that one of each would get overworked; and he said they might leave off the comma, because I never used it anyway; and he 'd like to have them throw in a dozen extra capital *I's*, and would like to get their rate on them by the hundred, because they wore out so fast.

"And then he and the manager got to talking about how much bother it was to have it packed and shipped every time, when I was travelling, and then the manager said: — 'Why don't you get a carrying case, and have it checked with her trunk?'

"Father pricked up his ears. 'Could I do that?' he asked.

"'Sure,' said the manager.

"'Let 's see them,' said Father.

"The manager brought out a fine large sole-leather case with metal corners, and set it up on a table. 'What do you think of that?' he asked. 'You just put your machine in that and have it checked with your trunk; and when your trunk comes to the hotel, there 's your type-writer along with it, and all you have to do is to open it up and go to work,' and he threw the lid back, for us to see. It certainly was fine.

"Then he put the type-writer in and fastened the clamps. 'There you are,' he said; 'you don't even have to take it out of the case to use it; and when you 're through, you just lock it up, and it 's all ready to go with your trunk; no packing to do, and no waiting for the express company to deliver it at the other end.'

"Of course there was nothing to do but to get it, and my smile surely did get overworked for a while there.

"The case had to be marked 'Fragile — with care,' and my initial; and there were the changes to be made in the type of the machine; so Father told them just to express it to Columbus when it

was done, for I was going there the next day, and he was to join me later.

"You remember the Kirbys who live in Columbus, and visited us last Winter? Well, Father had promised that I should spend some time with them, and had written that I would arrive that week. He left me to tell them what train I would come on; so I wrote a note the night before starting, telling them that I would be in at half-past eight the next evening.

"I had never been to Columbus before, and so when I got off the train, I looked all up and down the platform for Mr. Kirby and Mabelle; but they were n't anywhere in sight. 'Could n't get through the gates,' thought I, and I took a better grip on my things and started down the platform. I had my valise, — it 's alligator, you know, and it 's heavy, — and a three pound box of candy for Mabelle, and some magazines, and a bag of fruit, and my umbrella, and another box of candy that had been in my valise and would n't go back. My hat was wabbly, too.

"At the end of the platform was a tall flight of steps, — I never saw steps look so tall! — and I started up, trying to keep my shoulders back and

my head high, — and then I stepped on the front of my dress with the heel of my right foot. I never knew any one else who could do that trick, — and I can't, when I try. I did n't tumble, but my hat went so far over one eye, that I had to cock my head cornerwise to see where I was going, — and the bag of fruit under my arm got squashy.

"When I reached the top, I was glad that the Kirbys were n't in sight; and I wriggled my head until my hat went straight, and dropped the fruit so it would n't stain my waist; — and a man picked it up and tried to hand it to me, and as my hands were busy, he laid it on top of the pile of candy-boxes, and went on.

"I was sure that the Kirbys would be at the gate; but they were n't, and I went through and looked all around, and began to wonder what I 'd better do. I went across the platform and stood in the door of the station, so as to be in plain sight if they were looking for me, - but they did n't seem to be. I stood there until the clock said five minutes to nine, and then I decided to go and telephone to find out if they were on their way down there, — or how to get to their house.

"I loaded up my belongings and went across the

waiting-room to the information desk. There I unloaded again, and picked up the telephone directory. There were two or three telephones setting along the ledge of the desk. I followed the *K's* down the column, and then up, and then down again; but there was n't an R. M. Kirby among them.

"That was different. It had n't occurred to me that they might not have a telephone. The man in charge of the desk was busy writing. I waited a moment, and then I said: — 'Can you tell me the best way to get to 1944 Iuka Avenue?'

"'No, lady, I don't know the street,' he said, without looking up.

"'It 's out near the University,' I said.

"He kept on writing.

"I waited another minute. 'Can you tell me where I can get a cab?' I asked, meekly.

"He looked up for a second, and pointed with his pen: 'Outside,' he said.

"Of course I had n't supposed that it would be right in the waiting-room; but until he pointed, I had n't known which was the way out; for it is an awfully big station, and I did n't know in which direction to start.

"I loaded up again, and hung my umbrella to my little finger, and went down the waiting-room; it is at least two miles and a half long, — I know, because my arms were positively groaning when I reached the door at the end, and my knees felt shaky. I asked a man where the cab-stand was, and he pointed to a little sentry box with a window in it. I went and stood in line, and when I saw that the other people were handing out their checks to the heavy man inside, I thought I might as well attend to mine at the same time; so when my turn at the window came, I handed him the check and gave the address and paid for having my trunk taken out; and then asked what he would charge me for a cab out there. Father says I must always make my bargains beforehand, so as not to have any trouble.

"'One dollar,' he said, 'anywhere in town.'

"'All right. I want to go to 1944 Iuka Avenue.'

"'Where?' he said.

"'1944 Iuka Avenue.'

"'You 've got the number wrong, lady,' he said, and looked as if I had done it on purpose.

"'No,' I said, 'that is the right number.'

"'It could n't be, lady,' and he leaned around

and asked the person behind me what he wanted and I found myself away from the window and out of line.

"I set my things down and reloaded them, and then I asked a cab-driver who was standing close by, if he knew where 1944 Iuka Avenue was.

"'Nope,' he said. 'Never heard of such a street.' Then he got out a little vest-pocket book, and went to studying it. 'Um-m-um, um-hum, here it is,' he said. 'What did you say was the number?'

"'1944.'

"'Could n't be that, lady. Street 's only two blocks long and goes east and west, — could n't run higher than two hundred.'

"I turned away. I was n't worried, for I knew I could go to a hotel for the night, if it was necessary, but I hated to be worsted. So I got in line again, and when I reached the window once more, there was no one behind me. The man did n't recognize me at first; but when I said '1944 Iuka Avenue,' he scowled.

"'I told you that you had the wrong number, lady,' he said, and began checking his checks.

"'But it 's the right number,' I said. 'I 've been writing letters there for two years.'

"He kept on checking checks. 'Probably the postman knows where they live,' he said, without looking up.

"'But all their letters are headed that way,' I said.

"He pushed some papers aside with a jerk, and picked up a little book like the one the cabman had, and began shoving the leaves over with his thumb; then he said with a little snort, 'Street 's only two blocks long; — could n't be no such number.' Then he stuck the book in his pocket and went to checking checks.

"I thought things over for a minute. I did hate to give up; but he did n't seem to be interested enough so 's you could notice, and I did n't know who else to apply to. By and by I leaned close to the window: — 'What would you do if you were in my place?' I asked.

"'I 'd find out the right address,' he said, without looking up, — and went on checking checks.

"'How?' I asked, humbly.

"'Look in a city directory,' still figuring.

"'Where will I find one?'

"'Information desk,' he said in a tired tone, — checking checks.

"There was a city directory on a shelf right at his elbow, and when I thought of that several miles of waiting-room between me and the information desk, I felt like pinching him. I turned around, though, and started on the journey. I did n't dare to leave my belongings setting around there alone, and so I lugged them along.

"My umbrella was dragging when I reached the desk. I unloaded, and stretched my arms, and then tackled the directory. There it was, perfectly plainly to be seen, 'R. M. Kirby, 1944 Iuka Avenue.' There was n't any way around it; — but I could n't see that it helped me any.

"I turned to the information man. He was still writing, — and kept on. 'If you please,' I said.

"When he had written two or three sentences more, he looked up.

"'I wonder if you can't advise me a little,' I said.

"He dipped his pen again. 'What is it?' he said, holding it close to the paper and looking at it.

"I began at the beginning and told him all about it, going carefully into every detail. When

I had finished, he was still looking at his pen, — then he examined the point carefully, to see if the ink was dry.

"I waited a becoming length of time. 'What would you do in a case like that?' I asked, at last.

"'I don't know, lady,' said the information man; — and dipped his pen and went on writing again.

"I felt myself grin, — and also felt myself stiffen with the determination to get there that night, — even if it took until morning to do it.

"I loaded up again. I had got to be a regular expert in arranging those particular articles so that they would n't drop very often; for when one dropped, I had to put them all down on the floor and stack them back in my arms, one at a time, and then get up without scattering any, — and a thing like that takes pretty steady knees. I put my unbrella crosswise of both arms this time, and it worked first rate.

"When I had done the waiting-room journey again, and got out to the sentry box, the heavy man was still checking checks. I stopped at the window. '1944 Iuka Avenue is right,' I said; 'The directory gives it that way.'

"The man stopped figuring and looked squarely at me. 'Then the directory is wrong,' he said, — and went on checking checks.

"My enthusiasm was up, and I did n't feel a bit cross or worried, although it was almost ten o'clock, and I did n't know where I belonged, — or rather, how to get there. 'See here,' I said, 'I want to go out to that place to-night. Can't you send a cabman out with me, to find it?'

"He shoved his papers aside and yanked down the city directory. 'What 's the name?' he asked, slamming over the chunks of leaves.

"'R. M. Kirby.'

"He ran his finger down the column, with an expression that said: — 'Well, I suppose I 've got to show you your mistake, if you 're too stupid to see it yourself.' Then his finger stopped. 'H-m,' he said. He took out his vest-pocket book and studied it again. 'They got a telephone?' he asked.

"'No.'

"He slammed the directory shut and came out of the door. I followed him over to a row of cabs. He called to a driver, and said, jerking his head at me, — 'She wants to go to 1944 Iuka Avenue.'

"'I told her there was n't no such number,' said the man. 'Why, a number like that would be clear out to Newark!'

"'It 's close to the University,' I said; 'because Mr. Kirby is a professor, and walks to classes.'

"They did n't seem to be interested in my conversation. 'Could n't be no such number,' protested the cabman, in a sort of a hurt tone.

"'Well,' said the heavy man, looking snippy, 'she wants to go out there and ride around for a while, so you take her; — and say,' he called, 'charge her for whatever trouble you have.'

"That last aroused some more enthusiasm in me, all in a minute. 'See here,' I said, 'you agreed in the first place to take me anywhere in town for a dollar.'

"'Well, lady,' he said, in an exasperated tone, 'we can't drive you around all night, looking for some wrong number, for any dollar!'

"'But it is n't my fault if you don't know the town,' I said, 'and if 1944 Iuka Avenue is right, I don't see why I should pay you more than a dollar.'

"He grinned an awfully unpleasant grin. 'That 's right, lady,' he said. 'If he finds that

there 's any 1944 Iuka Avenue, you don't owe me but one dollar.'

"'All right, thank you,' I said, and jumped into the cab, and the cabman piled my luggage in and climbed up to his seat.

"We had n't gone much more than a block, and I was sputtering to myself because folks were n't up to date enough to have a telephone, when suddenly I had a bright idea. You remember Mr. Spencer, who went from our town last year? Well, I knew that he was a friend of the Kirbys; and he was a railroad man, so I was perfectly sure that he would have a telephone, and could tell me how to get to that blessed number.

"I tapped on the window and the cabman leaned around and opened the door. 'Stop at the first drug store,' I said, 'and I 'll call up some one who knows.'

"In a minute he drew up, and I went into the store and laid hold of the telephone directory. I knew that everything would be all right, now, for Mr. Spencer would probably come down and see me 'safe home.'

"But — his name was not in the telephone

book! I ran up and down that column six times; for I was perfectly sure that he would have one if no else in Columbus did, — but he was n't there.

"Chester, Columbus has *two* telephone companies, — and I did n't know it! Some people have one kind of a 'phone, and some people have another. Mr. Kirby has one kind, — and in the station, I had picked up the other directory, — so I did n't find his name. Mr. Spencer has the other kind, — and in the drug store, I got the different directory, never thinking but that they were all alike, and so *his* name was n't down.

"The druggist was n't checking checks nor writing, so I went up to him. 'Would you mind telling me whether you ever heard of such a number as 1944 Iuka Avenue?' I asked.

"'Well, I know right where it would be,' he said. 'I was out to 1948 to dinner Sunday.'

"My smile got into service again quick.

"'Would you mind saying that to the cabman out there?' I said, motioning toward the door.

"'Glad to,' said he, and followed me out.

"He and the cabman discussed matters a little, and he said 'Seventeenth Avenue,' and then I got back into the cab and we started on again.

"We rattled along beside the car tracks for ever so far, and then we turned off onto asphalt, and then turned again, and the lights in the houses got away back from the street, — and some of them away up high, and there were trees all about;— and then the lights stopped, and the trees seemed to come clear together overhead, and it was the very darkest road I ever was on.

"We had been going very slowly, and then we stopped for a moment, and then turned around and started back, and across a wide street, and then we stopped again beside a steep bank that had been newly cut down to the road. There were no trees just there, and there was moonlight enough so that I could see a little. The cabman got down and came around to the door. 'I don't know where we are,' he said; 'but there 's some sort of a sign up on the bank there. I 'll get up and see what it is.'

"The bank was about ten feet high, and he started to climbing up. I leaned out and saw that there were lights in houses away back from the street, and made up my mind to inquire in some of those places, if the cabman did n't find out anything on top of the bank. When he got

through scrambling up, he lighted a match and held it up to the sign. 'Eighteenth Avenue,' he said.

"What 's on the other side?' I asked.

"'Your street runs east and west,' he said, and began to climb down.

"'But look, do look!' I cried, perfectly certain that he would find it to be 'Iuka.'

"He scrambled back and lighted another match. 'Waldeck Avenue,' he read, cheerfully.

"I groaned, and he came sliding down the bank.

"'Where now, lady?' he asked.

"I got out of the cab. 'You wait here,' I said, 'I 'm going to inquire at that house.'

"He climbed into his seat again, and followed slowly, as I headed for the nearest window. I went along the sidewalk at first; and then, because it was too dark to find the pathway, I crossed the lawn, under the trees, and up onto somebody's veranda, and rang the bell.

"A gentleman came to the door, and looked rather surprised when he saw me, with my valise, at that time of night. 'Can you tell me where 1944 Iuka Avenue is?' I asked.

"'Right across the street, there,' he said, motioning with his hand.

"'But, — but, — ' I gasped '— this is Waldeck Avenue!'

"'Yes,' he said, kindly, 'this side of it is, — and the other side is Iuka.'

"'Oh,' I said 'it 's simple enough when you understand it, is n't it? Are all the streets here named like that? It 's a little puzzling to strangers, you know.'

"He laughed. 'No,' he said, 'they 're not all that way; but the two streets come together here at a sharp angle, — and this is just above the point.'

"'And that 's it?' I inquired, sighting carefully at the light, so as not to let it get away.

"'Yes,' he said, 'that 's it. Mr. Kirby lives there.'

"I thanked him and started on a bee-line for the light. The cabman followed me; but he had to go around by the street, while I went straight across the grassy flat-iron which divided the two streets, and up over the terraces, aiming squarely for the light.

"On the veranda steps I waited for the cabman

with the rest of my belongings. I had my valise with me, because my valuables were in it. As he came up, I rang the bell, and in a moment Mrs. Kirby opened the door, — and she was the most surprised woman you ever saw. My note to her arrived the next morning!

"Before we had any explanations, though, I said: 'What street is this, please?'

"'Why, it 's Iuka Avenue,' said she.

"'And what is the number of the house?'

"She pushed the button that lighted the veranda, and pointed to the '1944' at the side of the door.

"'How much do I owe you?' I asked, turning to the cabman.

"'One dollar, lady,' he said, — and then he grinned.

"I paid him, and then gave him something extra for the grin and for climbing that steep bank; — and then I asked him to please tell the gentleman in the sentry box that the number was 1944 Iuka Avenue.

"'You bet I will!' he said, — and he said it as if he liked the job.

"I found out afterward that it 's a new addition out there, only about two years old, and they are

going to have some curly streets in it, like the ones in a suburb of Indianapolis, where you step on your own heels if you walk too fast; and Iuka is going to be one of the curly ones. The upper part of it is pretty nearly east and west, and runs into a wild ravine; and the lower part, where the Kirbys live, comes out of the ravine more than a mile below, and is so short that it has n't gotten onto the map yet; — so the station people were n't so much to blame for not knowing where to find it; — but they need n't have been so afraid of over-thinking themselves in the effort.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CASE OF THE NEW TYPE-WRITER

"I HAD an awfully good time in Columbus. The very first day, Mabelle took me up through the ravine, — the one into which their street runs and gets lost, and then finds itself again at the upper end. It is the loveliest, wildest place, with great trees and a tangle of bushes and undergrowth, and perfectly alive with birds and squirrels; and golden-rod and purple asters were everywhere. Mabelle's white rabbit, Son Riley, and her cat, Buzzer, went along, and chased each other through the long grass and weeds, and had the finest time ever. There were a lot of great boulders all along the bottom of the ravine, and I got pretty much interested when Mabelle told me how some of them were meteors, and some glacial stones, and pointed out which was which. We got back just in time for lunch, and climbed the terraces to their house. You see, when they cut the street through the bottom of the ravine, they put the houses up on the top of the bank, and then terraced the front yards; but the vacant lots are

just like the banks of the ravine, with trees and boulders, exactly as they have been for hundreds of years, — and that 's how Mabelle got a joke on me the next morning. We were up early, and while we were waiting for breakfast, she and I went out and sat on the side fence, in our Jap kimonos, and listened to the birds and looked off down the hill, with Son Riley standing up tall, and nibbling at our toes.

"Presently I saw a big gray boulder, about a hundred feet down the hill. 'Look,' I said, pointing at it, 'Is that a meteor?'

"'No, Elizabeth,' said Mabelle, sweetly, 'that is n't a meteor, that 's a cow!'

"And then she shrieked so loud that the cow got up and looked at us. You see, it was a black and gray speckled cow, and she was lying down, with her head around to one side, where it did n't show, so that she looked exactly like a great gray rock; — and now they all say that I will never make either a farmer or an astronomer, if I can't tell a cow from a meteor. Mr. Kirby took me out after breakfast, and went to a lot of trouble to explain to me the difference; and pointed out that meteors did n't have horns, nor tassels on their

tails, and made her open her mouth and explained that meteors were n't lacking in front teeth in their upper jaws, and did n't chew cud; — until I wished that a genuine meteor would come along and show him how it was different from a cow.

"But I am not going to tell you about my visit in Columbus, or anywhere else, until I get home; and the rest of this letter is going to be a wild and weird tale entitled, 'The Case of the New Type-writer.' Does n't that sound legal, or criminal, or something?

"The machine reached Columbus all right. It came packed in a wooden box, and the case came the next day, packed in another; and Father got into town the same day. He stayed only half of the week, and then went on, and said for me to start for Washington on Wednesday, and he would get there about Saturday night.

"I felt pretty fine when I clamped the machine into the case and locked it, and reminded myself that there was n't another thing to do until I unlocked it in the hotel in Washington. I sent it to the station with my trunk; and t'en, when I went down to take my train, at about nine o'clock that night, I went into the baggage room

to check them. The baggage master set the case up onto the counter.

" 'Oh, I want to check that, too,' I said.

"'Can't check that, lady,' said the baggage master, pleasantly.

"'Why not?' I asked.

"'Against orders.'

"'But that 's what it 's for!' I gasped. 'It 's made for that.'

"'Can't help it, lady. We ain't allowed to check 'em. Too much risk.'

"'Then check it at her risk,' said Mr. Kirby. He and Mabelle were with me.

"'Can't do it. Against orders.'

"'But what shall I do?' I cried. 'My train goes in ten minutes.'

'The baggage master looked sympathetic. 'I 'll send a porter down to the car with it,' he said.

"That helped some; for I could barely lift the thing, by taking both hands and my knees, — but I could n't carry it more than three steps at a time that way.

"I said good-bye to Mr. Kirby and Mabelle at the gate, and followed the porter and the type-

writer case along the platform and down the stairs to the train. The porter set it between the seats in my section, and I climbed over it and sat down. You've no idea how big a type-writer case is until you come to divide up small quarters with it. I tried to shove it under the seat; but it was too high both ways, so I let it be. I did n't particularly mind climbing over it, anyway.

"The train started up, and pretty soon the Pullman conductor came through. When he caught sight of the case, he stopped short and glared. 'You can't have that in here,' he said.

"I just looked at him. There did n't seem to be anything to say, and so I did n't say it.

"'I said you could n't have that in here,' he remarked again.

"'Well, wh-where can I have it?' I asked, meekly.

"'It ought to be in the baggage car. Why did n't you have it checked?'

"'They would n't check it.'

"'Huh? Why would n't they?'

"'Said it was against orders.'

"'Well, you can't have it in here,' he said, and walked on.

"I sat and stared at the case, and the nice marking, 'Fragile, WITH CARE,' and sighed. I wished that the 'WITH CARE' was n't in capitals, — it was so suggestive, — I 'd never had so much care on my hands before in all my life. And it was such a perfectly well-behaved case too; — it was n't doing a thing.

"By and by the porter came in and began making up the berths, and I held my breath, hoping he 'd get to me before the conductor came back, but he did n't, and in a few minutes, the blue uniform came down the car and stopped at my seat. 'I told you you could n't have that in here,' he said.

"I suppose he had expected me to eat it while he was gone; but I had n't. 'I 'm — I 'm sorry,' I said, weakly.

"'It 's too big,' he said, shoving his toe against it.

"'It does n't run over into the aisle any,' I said.

"'Well, but suppose some one else takes that other seat, — what you going to do then? What 'll they do with their feet?'

"I had to admit that it was a poor outlook for

their feet, and that mine had cramps in them already.

"He seemed glad of that.

"'Well,' he said, 'we can't have it in here,'—and then he stood and waited.

"I was just beginning to get real bothered, when suddenly the funny side of it struck me, and I could feel the corners of my mouth going up. I tried to draw them down. "'Now, see here,' I said, 'suppose you were me, and this was your type-writer, what would you do with it, right now?'

"He moistened his lips several times. 'H-m,' he said, 'Well, I—I guess I'd have to carry it on the roof.'

"I tried to look relieved. 'How can I get up there?' I said, 'and will I have to stay with it, and hold it on?'

He laughed then, and so did I; and then he said that if the other berth was n't taken, the case could stay where it was; so I festooned myself around it and waited until we should have passed some place, I can't remember what, to see if any one had the berth.

"Some one had. A decided-looking man and his wife came in and compared the number of

the seat with their tickets, — and looked at the type-writer case. The conductor was n't in sight, so I asked them if they would n't as lief sit down in the seat across the aisle, because the porter was just coming to me. The woman was nice about it and the man did it, and I gave the porter a quarter and told him to hurry and make up the berth. You see, I wanted to get the type-writer into it before the conductor got back.

"I thought that I had the lower berth, but my ticket called for the upper one; and when the porter said he 'd ask the conductor about it, I told him to never mind, that I did n't care; if he could only get the case up there. He said he could do that all right, and he did, and I climbed up after it, and felt safe.

"He put it at the foot of the berth, and every once in a while, when I first went to bed, I would put my foot down, to see if it was there and behaving as it should; and then I went to sleep, and when I wakened up and put out my foot, the thing seemed farther away, and I began to be afraid that it was going to tumble off. I could n't go to sleep for thinking of it, and so by and by I crawled down there and got hold of the handle

and wrestled the thing up close beside me, where I could keep my hand on it. But that did n't help much; for every time that the train lurched, or went around a bend, it jiggled so that I was absolutely sure that it would slide off. And then I had an idea, — a perfectly good one. I took the blanket and tied one corner of it to some sort of a knob, or hook or something, in the back of the berth, and the other corner through the handle of the case. It left some slack, because the blanket was too thick to draw far through the handle; but I had it tied tight, and knew it could n't get away, so I crawled under the rope of blanket, and went to sleep.

"I was just explaining to Mabelle that the bright, shiny cow that we could see up in the sky, jumping over the moon, was really a meteor, and had teeth in both jaws, because I could see them, when suddenly it stumbled and came keeling over and over, right down toward us, and then it landed on my breast with a thud, and held me down, crushing me so I could n't breathe, — and my arms were under it, too, so I could n't struggle; — and then I knew I was awake, and there must be a wreck, and I was under the timbers; and I

kept my eyes shut for just a second longer, and then I opened them and saw, by the dim light, that there was n't any wreck. But the weight was still on my chest, and my arms were pinioned, and the man in the berth below was asking questions of his wife. I could n't hear what he said, but I could tell that it was questions, — and that he seemed to think it was her fault.

"I knew what was the matter, now; — that my type-writer had tumbled off, and was holding me down, with the blanket stretched across me. I could breathe fairly, up high, when I got used to it, but I could n't move a thing except my feet. I lay still and tried to decide what to do. The man kept on asking questions, and then he decided to find out what was the trouble. The road was pretty rough along there, and I guess he sat up, but could n't see what was the matter; for the case was hanging outside of the little curtain that drops from the bottom of the upper berth. I could just about tell what was going on, by the sound. He went to put his head out, to see what was doing, and just then the train went around a curve, and the case must have swung in real hard, exactly at the wrong time. It was a little higher up than

he was expecting to look for anything, and I guess it caught him just about on the crown of his head, — and it weighs more than fifty pounds, — and was swinging on the end of a blanket! Of course I don't know exactly what happened, but I think it knocked him up against the window, from the sound, — though he may have gone over there on purpose. Anyway, his voice came from over on that side awfully quick, — and he sounded as if he had a notion to throw his wife off the train.

"He had n't found out what was the matter, and I think that he went at it kind of easy the next time; and he 'd just got hold of the thing with both hands and was feeling to find out what it was, when the train swung the other way and he went out into the aisle, — all but his feet.

"Then he began to talk to his wife some more. I guess she must have held his feet, or done something like that, for she certainly was to blame that time, and he was n't going to stand for it.

"I was giggling until I ached all over, and it 's hard to giggle, when you 've only about a quarter of an inch of breathing space to do it in. Pretty quick he tackled the thing all over again, and followed the lead of the blanket, up to my berth.

"'What 's the matter up there?' he called.

"I tried to make my voice sound meek. 'My type-writer got away,' I said.

"'Well, why don't you haul it up?' he asked.

"'I can't, — I 'm under it,' I said.

"'Huh?' he asked.

"'The blanket 's holding me down,' I said.

"'Are you hurt?' called his wife, and I heard her scrambling out.

"I said 'no,' as her head appeared above the edge of the berth. 'I just can't move, that 's all.'

"So the two of them hoisted the machine until I could crawl out from under the blanket; and then, among us, we managed to get it back up again, the man sputtering all the time. He seemed to think that his wife's education, along the line of hoisting type-writers, had been neglected. When we had gotten it up, I hauled it over to the back of the berth and sat and leaned against it for the rest of the night. I was n't taking any more chances. It makes as good a chair-back as it does a type-writer case, anyway!

"I dressed early, and when we got to Washington I tipped the porter to carry the case to the platform, and then got a station porter to take

it to the checking-desk, and left it there. Then I took a car to the family hotel that Father had told me to go to. Father said he wanted me to learn to find places, instead of taking a cab everywhere. I did n't order my luggage sent, because I was n't sure whether they could put me up at that hotel, and if not, I 'd have to try another.

"During the morning I called up a friend of Father's, as I had promised to, and in the evening he came over, and said he would take me down to see the Congressional Library, and we could attend to the luggage at the same time.

"We went to the station first, and at the baggage room, I handed in my checks and gave the man the address, and told him that the type-writer was at the checking-desk.

"He shoved the check back to me. 'We can't take that up, Miss,' he said.

"I was glad he called me 'Miss.' In Columbus they had called me 'lady.'

"'It 's in a sole-leather travelling-case,' I said, as if that settled the question.

"'Can't help it, Miss,' which of course he could n't.

"'And you can't deliver it?'

"'No, Miss.'

"'Why not?'

"'Against orders.'

"'But why?'

"'Well, — a trunk might fall on it, you know.'

"We turned away, and went to the checking-desk. There was a boy there, and I told him about it. 'What shall I do?' I asked.

"'I 'd take it up myself, if I lived on that side of the city,' he said; '— but I don't.'

"I thanked him.

"'You might get a telegraph messenger,' he suggested.

"'But it 's so big,' I groaned, '— and they 're always so little.'

"'Why don't you go and look 'em over and pick out the biggest boy on the bench?'

"I turned to find the bench, when Father's friend came to the rescue. 'I 'll take it up,' he said. Father's friend is not so very young, but he is desperately slim.

"'Oh, you can't!' I exclaimed.

"He threw his shoulders back. 'Certainly I can,' he remarked decidedly, and then he told the boy at the desk that we would be back for it

in about an hour, — and we started for the library.

"I 'm not going to write you one word about that library. It and my vocabulary are n't built on the same lines, and they won't associate at all, — won't even nod in passing.

"It was more than an hour before we got back to the station, and when the boy set that heavy case on the counter, I felt like crawling under it, — under the counter, I mean. The man did n't fit the case, any better than my vocabulary fits the library; but he was braver than I am, — he tackled it, — and he changed hands three times before we got to the door! That was doing real well, though, for the waiting-room is almost as wide as the Columbus one is long; — and he only set it down once on the way to the car. I was awfully afraid the conductor would n't let us take it on; but he did n't even notice it, and everything went swimmingly. In one place we had to change cars, and I did wish that the thing had two handles, so that I could help get it across the street. The only time we had any trouble was when he 'd gotten it about half way across, and it suddenly got heavier than he had thought it was, and

he set it down quick, and he had n't quite stopped going, and his feet and knees got tangled up in it; — but he was n't cross about it at all. He said it was good for his muscles.

"We had to walk almost three blocks after we got off of the car, and then was when things got strenuous. He set it down every ten steps, so that he could point out buildings and statues to me. Some of the things I could n't see, because they were around the corner or across the block; but they were somewhere near, and he wanted to tell me about them. And when we were n't stopping, he changed hands so often that I felt as if I were walking with a physical culture person, who was swinging Indian clubs. He really got quite a swing on it after a while, especially when he had put his handkerchief over the handle, so as to get a better grip. I was rather glad when we reached the hotel, though.

"It was all right after I got it to my room and into my clothes-press. It 's a perfectly good travelling-case, — when it is n't travelling.

"When Father came, I told him my tale of woe, and it was worth all of my troubles, just to hear him laugh. 'What are you thinking

about using that case for, from now on?' he asked.

"'I don't know,' I said. 'It might do for a mantlepiece ornament, if it were n't quite so wide; but I 'm afraid it would topple off, unless it was shaved down some.'

"'I 'll tell you,' said Father; 'You can cut some little slits in it and use it to carry a cat or dog in. It would be fine for that.'

"'But I have n't any cat or dog,' I objected.

"'Oh, well, we could pick one up cheap,' said Father.

"'But that would n't carry the type-writer.'

"'That 's so,' said Father, 'I had n't thought of that. Well then, I 'll have a couple of wheels put on it, and some straight handles, and you can use it for a perambulator, and wheel it home 'cross country. But really, chicken,' he said, more soberly, 'what *are* you going to do? I have to leave you again to-morrow.'

"'Don't bother about it,' said I. 'I 'd sort of like to work the thing out for myself.'

"'You 're game,' he said; 'go ahead.'

The next day I saw him off on the train, and then went to the Washington office of the type-writer

company and told a salesman there all about my trouble. He was very nice, and very interested, and explained that all of my trials were due to rules that the railroads had just adopted, and which the Indianapolis manager probably did n't know about.

"'I 'll tell you what we 'll do,' he said; 'You let us know when you are ready to go, and we 'll send up after the machine, and we 'll clamp it into the case, and put the case into a wooden box and pack it around with excelsior, and send it by express.'

"'But,' I said, 'what 's the advantage of having a case, if you do it so?'

"'Why — well — you get it home that way, you know.'

"But I could n't see exactly where the advantage lay, in that.

"Then I went to the express office; and the agent said that he would ship it in the case, without boxing, — for exactly double rates.

"I decided to make another effort to check it, and if I could n't, to take it on the train with me.

"I was going from there to East Aurora, New York, and did n't have to change cars at all; so

I hired a man to take it to the station. The baggage man refused to check it. 'If it was in a square trunk, I could check it, Miss,' he said.

"'But what 's the difference?' I asked.

"'They would n't know what was in it.'

"'But would n't it get handled like other trunks then?' I asked, '— all banged around?'

"'Yes 'm.'

"I hired a porter to carry it out to the train, and as soon as the Pullman porter came into the car, I gave him fifty cents real quick. It was a parlor car, and he took a lot of pains to set the case back, close to the window, and I draped myself over it, and when the conductor came in, he never guessed that there was anything so ferocious within a thousand miles of him; — and everything was lovely all the way to East Aurora. I thought that I had solved the problem.

"The train pulled in at about nine o'clock at night, and my car stopped something like a block from the baggage room; and of course there were n't any porters around a little place like that. The station was clear across the street from where I was, and I stood there beside the incubus ('incubus' is a perfectly good word, — I looked

it up, and it means nightmare, or a sensation of depressing weight on your chest!) until the train pulled out. Then I stood there a while longer; but nobody went by. There was a little cigar store close to the track, and I took my valise over and set it close to the wall of that, and then I went back and took hold of the handle of the nightmare. It fought back; but I wrestled it over to the door of the store, and asked the young man in charge if he would be willing to keep it until I sent for it.

"He said he 'd be glad to, and he set it behind the counter, and I started for the Inn. Father had told me just how to go, and, oh, Chet, was n't it good — good — good, to breathe in that country air, full of the smell of the leaves that were fluttering down all over the board walks, and of the grass, and of the fruit lying under the trees in the dooryards? It was dark; but I knew just what every odor and sound meant, and I could hear the apples thud down onto the grass, when a little breeze blew, and I could scuff through the leaves that rustled all about my ankles. I 'd been in the cities so much that I felt as if I were suddenly free again, and I wanted to wave my arms and just squeal with delight. You know I 'm

never afraid to be out alone at night, and so that did n't bother me a bit, even if the place was strange; — but then, you know, the country never is really strange, — it is home everywhere.

"The boy who carried my valise to my room at the Inn, looked strong, — everybody looks strong down there, — and so I asked him if he would go to the cigar store and get the type-writer. It was about half a mile away, I guess. He said he would; so I put the 'CARE' off of my mind, and went down to the living-room to write to Father, because I wanted the letter to go out early in the morning.

"The boy was gone a dreadfully long time, and when he did come in with the machine, he did n't look very pleased. 'Did you have any trouble with it?' I asked, anxiously.

"'Went after it with my bicycle!' he remarked.

"'Why, how in the world did you manage?' I gasped.

"'I 'll never tell you. The thing won't ride, and it won't walk, and the bicycle either shied or kicked at it every time I got 'em within two rods of each other.'

"I followed him up stairs with it, feeling dread-

fully guilty; — and then, when I got there, and he had put it on the table and unlocked it for me, and I went to pay him, — he would n't take a cent! I felt about two inches high! It 's queer, though, is n't it, Chet, that we are in such a habit of paying for everything that any one does for us, that when some person who is n't a particular friend is willing to do a kindness, just to help, it makes us feel small to accept it? It does n't seem as if it ought to be that way, does it? Before I left there, I got used to having kindnesses done, — just to be kind. It is a mighty pleasant thing to get used to, — and it is contagious, too.

"I had a week of the glorious out-doors there. I never saw such out-doors before; — such crooked brown roads that lead you on and on, because you know that just around the bend is going to be something that you absolutely must see; but you never get tired. And such a wonderful little river, winding and twisting, with the trees meeting overhead, and the vines dropping down and patting your cheeks and tweaking your hair as you row under them. And down below the dam, it is shallow, only a foot deep, perhaps, and running over a perfectly flat rock bottom as smooth as

pavement; but it is more than a hundred feet wide; and there are funny boulders, shaped like monstrous turtles, that work themselves out of the high shale banks and roll down into the clear water, and lie there for stepping-stones, or to sit on. And one side of the river is always low, either meadow or woods, coming close to the water; and the other side is always a high bluff, sometimes of shale, and sometimes with pine trees growing all over it; — and sometimes the bluff is on one side and sometimes on the other, but never on both at once. And the pine trees dip their branches into the water,— and there are wintergreens, and butternuts, and wild apples.

"And there is a wonderful glen that looks as if no one but you had ever been there for a thousand years. The sides are straight up, and covered with great trees, and old logs grown over with moss and vines; and in the rocks of the bottom, which the water flows over, are what look like the prints of people's feet, made so long ago that it makes you feel weird and tiny. And when you fit your feet into them, it throws you into the very position in which some one stood, so desperately long ago, when that rock was only

clay. And at the upper end of the glen, is a tall cascade, which they say is a hundred and ten feet high, and the water falls into a clear, rocky pool and —

"But there, Chet, this is The Case of the Typewriter, and if I get to talking about outdoor things, you know what will become of everything else!

"There were quite a number of Christian Scientists at the Inn, and there is a church building that the Scientists put up for themselves. It is a wee little one; but on that lovely, shady village street, where everything is quiet and beautiful, it looked just as good to me as some of the great, big, handsome ones that I have seen in cities. I have never seen a city anywhere nearly so beautiful as that little village of twenty-five hundred people; — even our town is clumsy compared with it, and the world does n't joggle as it turns around, there.

"Father was there for only three days, and then left me to come on to Chicago alone. Uncle Fred is still here; but Aunt Fannie has gone away on a visit, and so he is staying at a hotel on the South Side. Father said for me to get off

of the train at the Hyde Park station, and Uncle Fred would meet me and take me to the hotel. The only change for me to make was at Buffalo, and that was all in the same depot.

"I went down to the East Aurora station to get my ticket, in the morning of the day before I was to leave, and asked the agent how early I would have to start my trunk down, so that it would be sure to get onto the early train.

"'That train don't wait to take on baggage here,' he said; 'you 'll have to get it down by four o'clock this afternoon, so it can go yesterday.'

"I gasped. 'But — but how can it go yesterday?' I asked.

"'Well, if it goes to-day, then when you go to-morrow morning, it will have gone yesterday, won't it?' looking as if I wearied him.

"I had to admit that it would, and hurried back to the Inn to pack.

"My train went before seven o'clock the next morning, and as I took an ordinary day-coach into Buffalo, which is only seventeen miles, and the baggage-man put my type-writer into the car for me, I had no trouble. You see, I did n't dare to try to check it clear through from East Aurora

for fear that it would be held up in Buffalo, and I had only fifteen minutes between trains there. So I decided that, since my early tip to the porter from Washington had worked so well, I would try that way again.

"The trip to Buffalo took only half an hour, — that is, as far as the Buffalo 'yards'; but when we got there, our train stopped to wait for another train to get through doing something, and then it waited for some engines to do things, and then it backed a little way and sat down to think about it.

"I looked at my watch, and then took my valise and carried it to the front of the car and went back and tackled the type-writer; but about six men jumped before I had gotten a fair hold on the handle, and the way it was hustled out onto the platform of the car, must have given it a shock. I told some of them that I had to make the train that was going in six minutes, and they got interested and almost tumbled off the train trying to see what was the matter, and how near in we were; and when the conductor came along, they pretty nearly mobbed him; and then they got out their watches, and put their thumb-nails on

the dials, and watched those six minutes sprint by. I never saw people so interested, and so anxious to help, as they are around that part of the country. I believe that the bricks and mortar in cities crowd people so close together, that they don't have room to stretch out helping hands, — and helping thoughts. But *there*, — why, you 'd have thought that every one of those men — and several women, too, — simply *had* to get that very train, and tried to shove things along for me. I think they 'd all have got out and helped me push the train, if it would have done any good.

"Our engine started up before the six minutes were gone; though it went awfully slow, and things began to look as if I might make the train by the skin of my teeth after all. And when we did pull into the station, before we had quite stopped, the men piled off with the type-writer and me, and a man in a blue uniform called out: — 'Train for Chicago on the next track! Down the stairway, please,' and we all looked pleasant and made a wild rush.

"When we came up out of the subway, there stood the train, and I said, 'For Chicago?'

"'That train 's gone, Miss,' said the guard; 'but you can get on this and go to Welland and wait for it.'

"'*Wait* for it?' I said. I began to think that my head was getting wabbly.

"'Yes, Miss, it goes around by the Falls, you know, and gets to Welland half an hour after this. You can use your ticket.'

"That seemed all right, so I climbed on, and two of the men from East Aurora brought in my belongings and wished me good luck, and I was off again. It was a parlor car, and I got the incubus over close to the window and festooned myself around it once more and thought I would be all right for the hour or so between there and Welland.

"By and by the porter came in and looked suspiciously at my drapery.

"'Customs has to examine yo' things, Miss,' he said.

"I unlooped myself and handed him a quarter, and he set the case and my valise beside another chair, where there was a man's suit-case. He did n't ask for my keys, but he had the suit-case open. By and by the customs officer came

in and poked over a few things in the suit-case and passed on; and the incubus sat there, as quiet as you please, all the way to Welland, where the porter set it off for me, and I began to wait for my train.

"The station was a brand new one, about eight by ten feet, or something like that, and there were a lot of men in working clothes and tobacco juice standing around the platform talking things over, or just leaning back and thinking about them. I never saw so many men leaning their backs against things for so long a time before in my life. It seemed as if they must think that the side walls of the new building were made to lie on, and they were testing them to see which board was the softest. There was an old lady there, too, and she told me all about every sickness that every member of her family had had since they arrived, and was just starting in on the neighbors, when my train came.

"It stopped with all the mail cars and day coaches, and such things, right beside me, and away off on the horizon was the car that I belonged to. The old lady had kept me so busy that I had n't thought of a plan for getting aboard, —

and I was suddenly up against it! Not a porter was in sight. I grabbed my load of 'CARE' and tried to drag it; but I had only one hand to spare, and it would n't budge. I looked around, and there was every one of those weary men leaning up against the wall and watching me.

"I got enthusiastic all of a sudden. 'Please, one of you come and help me with this,' I called; — and not one of them stirred, — they just looked a little interested and curious.

"'I 'll pay you, of course,' I said.

"At that, one of them straightened up part way and thought about it, and then came over and picked up the type-writer and sauntered down toward the rear of the train, and I followed. In a minute a porter in a white coat came running toward us and grabbed the case and hurried me to my car; and the man kept along fast enough until I had gotten a quarter out of my purse, and then he dropped back.

"I took out a fifty-cent piece at the same time, thinking that I had a good chance to get on the right side of the porter, early; and when he placed the case in my section, I handed him the money.

"He thanked me, and grinned, and I asked for a paper bag for my hat.

"'Oh, ah ain't de portah, Miss,' he said; 'Ah'm fum de dinin'-cah' — and he melted away, while I fished for another half-dollar to pay the nightmare's expenses. When the real porter came, I handed it to him, and looked pleasant, and he did n't appear to notice the type-writer, and as there was n't another passenger in the car, I thought that my troubles were over; — but I had n't counted upon the conscience of the Pullman conductor!

"He came in, he spied it, and he looked shocked and astonished, and said that it could n't stay. He said that it should have been checked, and I agreed with him, but said that I could n't seem to find a baggage master of the same opinion.

"He said it would cost him a fifteen-day lay-off if an inspector should see it.

"I mentioned the fact that there were n't any inspectors on the car just then, nor any one else, and that, consequently, it was n't crowding any one so as to notice.

"He said that did n't make any difference, — that he had been laid off fifteen days once before

on a smaller grip than that; and he could n't afford it. He seemed to have a morbid suspicion that there was an inspector peering in at one of the ventilators, or somewhere.

"I told him if he 'd put it up on the seat, I 'd sit on it, if that would help any; but it did n't seem to, and he went away mourning, and returned to mourn, and sat down behind me and mourned, and in front of me and mourned. He could n't sit down beside me or opposite me, because there was n't any room for his feet. I did n't dare to try to tip him; for I was afraid that conductors were above that sort of thing, and I did n't want to make him feel any worse; so I sat and stared at the 'Fragile, WITH CARE,' and felt as if his wife and sixteen children were going to starve to death on my account; and every time the train stopped, I held my breath for fear that an inspector would come in and say, 'Off with his fifteen days!' — and I could fairly hear those hungry children weep.

"Well, neither the inspector nor any one else came into the car, and at last we got to Hyde Park, at ten o'clock at night. The train stopped with my car away down in Indiana somewhere;

— at least it was n't within a block of the entrance of the Hyde Park station, and was out among the tracks, more than a hundred feet from the nearest end of the platform. No one else got off and there was n't a light out there in the wilderness. The porter set the case down beside me, and picked up his foot-stool and swung aboard the train, and it drew away and left me there in the darkness.

"Clear down on the platform, where the lights were, I could see Uncle Fred, watching each car as it went by, and wondering why I had n't come, as per my telegram; but he could n't see me, away off there in the dark; and so, when the train had rumbled over the viaduct, he started for the entrance.

"I felt like sitting down on 'Jonah' and weeping. I did n't though. I made sure that the incubus was beside the track, instead of between the rails, and then I made a wild run after Uncle Fred's retreating figure. He had gotten down the steps, and was just going through the turnstile, when I caught him, and you never saw any one look so astonished in your life.

"'Where on earth did you drop from?' he asked, his eyes popping away out.

"'Oh, I just walked in from Indiana,' I said. 'Come, you have to go back after my type-writer.'

"'Where is it?' he asked.

"'Just about on the State-line, I guess,' — and he followed me back.

"When we got somewhere near where it ought to be, he lit a pocket fuse, so as to find it; and when at last it struck his eye, his face lighted up with appreciation.

"'Well, look at the fine type-writer case!' he cried; 'Now you *are* sensible!'"

CHAPTER XIV

BESS AND I GO SHOPPING

IT was the middle of October when Bess got home, and from that time on, the days fairly flew, until, before we knew it, Christmas was looming up about three weeks off. She and I got to talking about it one Saturday early in December.

"What you going to give your father?" I asked.

"I bought him one very, very fine handkerchief in each town I was in this Fall, and I've been embroidering his signature on them."

"His initials, you mean," I grinned.

"No, I don't, I mean his signature. I took it off of the bottom of a letter, with carbon-paper, and worked over it."

"Forger!" I said.

Bess laughed. "It was awfully hard to do, for the letters were so little and uneven; but they looked all right when they were done, and he thinks they're fine.'

"*He* does? You haven't shown them to him?"

Bess nodded. "I gave them to him the last time he was at home."

I stared. Bess was n't the kind of a girl who could n't keep a thing to herself, or wait for the proper time. "What did you do it for?" I asked.

"Well," said Bess, "I had them finished, and I did n't see any reason for keeping them for a month or so, when he might as well be using them. I don't see the sense in saving up all your kindnesses to do in a bunch, once a year. Why not scatter them along a little?"

"But what 'll you do Christmas? He 'll expect you to give him something more then."

"No, he won't," said Bess.

"Oh, you told him they were a Christmas present?"

"Indeed I did n't. I told him that I made them for him because I love him, and wanted to do it, and not just so I could give him something at some particular time, only because he 'd expect something, and everybody else would be giving things. He saw the point, and said he 'd a lot rather have a gift just when the feeling prompted a person — instead of from habit, or from fashion."

It did sound sort of sensible, and I remembered how much more my compasses meant, coming as a surprise, and only because she knew I wanted them, than as if she 'd held them back for Christmas, when I 'd have been expecting something. Besides, I 'd had a chance to get a lot of good out of them during the Fall.

"I 'm going to give Mother a gold thimble," I said. "I heard her say, one day last Summer, that when she was a little, little girl, she wanted a gold thimble, — and she 'd wanted one ever since. She had always intended to get one, but people kept giving her silver ones, and keeping her supplied, and she guessed she 'd never get her stock low enough to warrant buying one for herself. So I made up my mind that I 'd get her a gold one for Christmas. But since she 's lost two or three of her 'stock,' I 've been desperately worried for fear she would buy one herself, before the time came, because I know she 's needed one.'

"It will make a nice gift," said Bess.

I was thinking. "Is n't it funny," I said, at last, "that I never even thought of getting it for her right then, — or anyway, as soon as I knew

she needed one? I had the money and could have bought the thing just as well as not, but all I thought of was what a nice Christmas gift it would make. It seems sort of foolish, when you come to think of it, does n't it?"

"It surely does," said Bess.

I thought again. "Well," I said, "what 's the matter with getting it right now? We have 'em in the store, and Dad will give it to me at cost. She 's only got one left, and she 's doing a lot of embroidery for Christmas; and whenever she picks that up, her thimble is up in the sewing room, in her work basket; and when she goes to darn anything, it 's down in the pocket of her embroidery apron. I heard her say the other day that she was going to bore a hole in it and hang it around her neck, so she would n't wear the stairs out so."

"And the gold one would be perfectly fine to keep with her embroidery all the time," said Bess.

"Of course she could keep it there after Christmas," I said. I was n't quite ready to take the Christmas label off of it, after all.

"But the embroidery will be all done then," said Bess.

I knew it would; for Mother only does it when Christmas comes in sight, and then she nearly sews her fingers off for a couple of months and scarcely goes out for a breath of air. "I believe I 'll get it now," I said. "Come on down to the store with me and help pick it out."

Bess agreed, and we started. At first we chatted for a while, and then Bess got to thinking and was pretty quiet for several blocks. By and by she said: — "Chet, when we do something nice for a person, we always like that person better, don't we?"

"Yep," I said, "I 've noticed it."

"Well," said Bess, slowly, "there 's one person that you and I don't like as well as we ought to."

"Who?" said I.

"That other girl."

I did n't say a word.

"It 's up to us, Chet," said Bess. "We 've got to get ready to like her, anyway. If she comes while we feel this way, she won't have a fair show, — and we won't, either. We 'll be looking for trouble all the time, even if we try not to. I've been working on it, but I don't feel like hugging

her yet; — and sometimes I feel distinctly sour, when I think of her coming."

"I feel that way *all* the time," I said. "She 'll just have to make the best of what she finds when she comes, that 's all. I 'm going to be selfish and take it the way that will be easiest for me. I have n't got but one life to live."

Bess shook her head. "We 're taking it the way that will be the very hardest for us both, and her too. It 's a great deal harder to be sour than to be sweet."

"Not for me."

"Yes it is. When a thing is all over and you come to average it up, you 'll find that all of the hard things have come of the sourness, — and all of the easy things have come of the sweetness."

That was a new way of looking at it.

"And so I was thinking," went on Bess, "that if we each of us want to do something for the other, — not for Christmas, but for friendship, — the really best thing would be for us both to do something for that other girl."

I bit some of the ragged edges off of the top of my lead pencil. "How can we?" I asked, after

a while, "She has n't come yet, and we don't even know where she lives."

"But we could get it in advance, you know." Bess was very much in earnest. "You put in whatever you were going to spend for me, and I 'll put in what I was going to spend for you, and we 'll club together and get something to have ready for her when she comes."

Somehow I liked the idea. I would n't have supposed that such a thing would look good to me, but it did. "What 'll we get?" I asked. "We don't know what sort of things she likes."

"It would be nice to get something for her room," said Bess; and we talked it over, all the way to the store, and at last decided upon a writing desk, if we could get one to fit our purses.

Uncle Rob was behind the counter when we went in, and helped us to choose the thimble, and we got a dandy, and then waited for Dad to come in and tell us what it would cost. Of course I knew the cost mark, ordinarily, but the one we picked out seemed to have been marked wrong, for I was positive that it cost more than the letters made it. While we were waiting, Bess and I browsed around, and she found a silver key ring

that she wanted, and put her hand in her pocket for her purse, — and it was n't there.

"Why," she exclaimed, "I 'm perfectly sure I put that in my pocket before I started!" — and then she went on saying some things about nothing being lost, and so on, as if she were trying to reassure herself, while she was looking about for it.

"Bess!" said Uncle Rob, looking at her in a surprised way.

Bess bit her lip.

"What 's the matter?" I asked. "It 's all right for her to use her Science to help her know it is n't lost, is n't it?"

"It certainly is," said Uncle Rob. "Bess, you tell him what was the trouble."

"Partly bad manners," said Bess, shrugging her shoulders. "It 's just as bad manners to take your dose of Christian Science out loud in public, as it is to have your bottle and teaspoon at the table and take your dose of medicine under everybody's nose. When any one brings his medicine bottle to the table, every one else feels like throwing plates at it; and when you talk your Science treatments out loud, every one feels like throwing contradictory thoughts at them."

"I wish I was n't so material in my thinking," I said. "I believe things that I see; no matter how hard I try to know differently."

"Do you really believe everything you see?" asked Uncle Rob. We had some new clerks in for the holidays, and so he was not so very busy just then.

"Why, sure I do," I said.

"Some one has said, 'Matter is experience.' When you look down a long stretch of railroad track, you *see* the rails come together at a point in the distance, don't you?"

"Yes."

"But do they?"

"No."

"But you might think that they did, excepting for experience, might you not?"

I had to admit that I probably would. "But," I said, "if I see anything the matter with *me*, that 's different. I have to believe that scratch on my hand, — I know where I got it, too."

"That 's the main trouble," said Uncle Rob; "you think you know where you got it; — and lots of times you hit your hand and think you 've hurt it, until you look and see that there is n't

any mark, and then you decide that you have n't, and it does n't bother you any more. Experience, based upon lack of understanding, is what makes all the bother."

"But how can I help believing that scratch? — and it feels sore now that we 're talking about it, too."

Uncle Rob took up a sheet of stiff paper, about six by nine inches, and rolled it into a cone which was something like an inch and a quarter across the big end, and three-fourths of an inch at the little end; then he fastened it with a scrap of gummed paper from the stamp drawer, and snipped off the corner at the top, so as to make it straight around.

Bess and I were watching him curiously.

"Now, Chet," he said, "hold the big end of this close to your right eye, up tight against it, with your eye open so that you can look through."

I did.

"Now hold your left hand with the palm toward your face, and the edge of your hand resting against the cone at about two inches from the big end. Now keep both eyes open, and what do you see?"

"A hole clear through the palm of my hand."

"Are you sure?"

"Yep. I can see my hand all around the hole, just as plainly as I ever saw anything in my life, and I can see you right through the centre of it."

"Does it hurt any?" asked Uncle Rob.

"Not a bit."

"I 'll guarantee that it would, if you thought that you could remember the experience of getting the hole there, though," said Uncle Rob.

I was interested. "I guess you 're right," I said. "If I 'd shot myself in the hand, and it was all bandaged up, and a doctor would come in with one of these things, fixed up to look professional, and tell me that it was a sort of an X-ray business which would look through the bandages and show me the condition of my hand; — and I looked through and saw what I see now; — why, I 'd think I was maimed for life, — and no one could tell me any different, because I could see for myself. I 'll bet it would hurt like the dickens, too; — and if it did n't, I 'd think the nerves were paralyzed, and that would be worse still."

Uncle Rob laughed. "Well, you think a little about matter being experience," he said, "and

then eliminate all of the experiences that you can't absolutely and infallibly depend upon, — and see what you have left. It 's worth trying."

Just then Dad came in and we went back to the thimble case. I showed him the one that we had picked out. "All right," said Dad; "You may have it at cost."

"But what is the cost?" I asked.

Dad looked disgusted. "Chet," he said, "you 've known that cost mark for five years. What 's the matter with you?"

"But this one can't be marked right," I said. "I know it cost more than a dollar and a half."

"Of course it did," said Dad.

"But see,—'m-a-q,' — that 's what it 's marked."

"Chet," he said, "have n't you any eyes or any reasoning powers at all? Don't you see that little '2' up there above the last letter?"

"Yes; but what does it mean?"

"Well, what *should* it mean excepting that it cost just twice what the mark says? Is n't that plain enough?"

"Yes, when you know it," I said; "but you never did that before."

"Well, such a lot of people have come to know

our mark, that I have got to make some change in it; and I 'm marking part of the new goods this way. It 's plain enough if you use a little common sense."

I had to admit that it was, and Uncle Rob put the thimble into a box while Bess and I browsed some more among the new Holiday stuff. After a while I found a portfolio that I wanted, and looked at the mark, and then I took it to Uncle Rob. "What would you think that cost?" I asked.

"A dollar and a half," said Uncle Rob, — "the same as the thimble did n't."

"And it 's marked to sell at one-twenty-five!"

"Better buy at retail," said Uncle Rob. "But wait, there 's that little two-spot, exactly where the other one was, — that makes it cost three dollars."

"Worse and worse! But what do you suppose it really did cost?"

"Can't prove it by me," said Uncle Rob, shaking his head.

I waited until Dad came up the store again. "Say, Dad," I called; "I want to buy this portfolio."

"Well then, why don't you buy it?" said Dad.

"I — I don't know what it cost."

Dad came over to the counter. "Well, why don't you look at the cost mark, Chester?" he said.

I shook my head, and he turned the portfolio over and put the point of his pencil on the ticket. "Can't you see that?" he asked. "What does that letter stand for?"

"One."

"And that?"

"Five."

"And that?"

"Naught."

"Well then, what is it?"

"A dollar and a half."

"Well then, what 's the matter?"

"Nothing, only it 's marked to sell at one-twenty-five."

Dad pulled it closer to him; then he said, "Oh!" and put his pencil on the little "2." "Can't you see that?" he asked.

"Yep."

"Well then, what more do you want? Can't you divide a dollar and a half by two? If you can't do it in your head, here 's my pencil," and he looked sarcastic.

"Oh, then it cost seventy-five cents?"

"Why, certainly," said Dad. "I do wish that you would try to use some common sense, Chester, instead of having to have everything explained to you, as if you were five years old!" — and then he went off down the store again.

When I had my packages done up and Bess had her key ring, — she had found her purse in her blouse instead of her pocket, — we went over to the furniture store to look for a desk. We got just about discouraged, because everything was so expensive, and were about ready to think that we would have to decide upon something else, when the furniture man said,—

"Say, I've got one here that I can sell you cheap if you can use it. The pigeon-holes got broken in shipping; and the house gave me a rebate on it, rather than have it sent back. I'm no good at little delicate jobs like that; — I can tackle a sofa or a table, but a thing of that kind would take me longer than it's worth; — and it's been here more 'n a year, now. If you think you can fix it up, you can come down here and do it, and use my tools, — and you can have it at your own price."

It was a mighty pretty little oak desk, with a lid that closed up and locked, and I knew at a glance that it would be just fun to make new pigeonholes for it, — and Bess and I jumped at the bargain, quick.

I could n't go to work at it until after Christmas, for I had to put in all of my spare time at the store through the Holiday season; but when that was over, I went down to the furniture shop for three Saturdays and worked on it; — and when it was finished, no one would ever have guessed but that it was perfectly fresh from the factory.

I thought a good deal while I was working on it, too, — about how queer it was that I should be giving all this time to fixing something for that other girl, — when I had made up my mind to hate her. And that made me think of some Chinese characters that I had seen explained; how certain marks meant certain things, and then they were grouped together to mean other ideas; and the marks which went to make up the word "hatred," meant, when separated, "crookedness of the heart." And crookedness in people is deformity, — and every one dreads and turns away from deformity. It seemed queer to think

that I had been willing to let myself be deformed that way, — when I did n't have to be It would be worse to have your heart crooked, than your spine, too, — and it would show just as plainly, when it had once worked to the surface.

And I got to thinking pretty soberly about that other girl, — how she did n't have any home, and was coming among strangers and did n't know what they would be like, — and probably she was feeling sort of worried and frightened about it; and I began to see how much bigger a thing it was in her life than in mine, because it would all be new to her, — a new place, and new people, and everything different from what she had been used to; and I began to see that it was up to me to help her all I could; — and I worked more decent thoughts into those little pigeon-holes than I ever got into line in double that time in my life before.

Bess was making a writing set for the desk,— a blotting pad with leather corners, and a blotter and penwiper. She did a lot of the same sort of thinking over her work; and when we came to compare notes, we found that we 'd spent our money to mighty good advantage, and given each

other a lot more that was worth while than we were giving to that other girl.

We did n't tell anybody about the desk, because we did n't want to have to talk about *her*. We 'd got to feeling pretty respectably toward her — and we did n't want anybody else butting in; so we left it at the furniture store until we should be ready for it.

The month of January dragged some, as it always does; but February was a short month and we sailed over that, just touching the high places. I read a good deal in the Christian Science text-book during the winter evenings; and found a lot of difference between looking for things that I could understand, and looking for things to quarrel with. It was perfectly astonishing how friendly the difficult ones became, when I had made friends with their relations! — and I got real chummy with the best society of thoughts that I 'd ever come into contact with; — and some of them I had n't even had a bowing acquaintance with before; — and there were some perfectly fine ones that I had been in a habit of throwing stones at whenever I caught a glimpse of them, that I found now to be a lot better company than all

the companions that I had ever had before in my life. I used to ask Bess a lot of questions — not so that I could contradict them, but because I wanted to know how she looked at them.

One day I said, "Bess, if the healing is n't the most important part of Christian Science, why could n't a person be a Christian Scientist and leave that part out of it?"

"Well, for goodness' sake," said Bess; "what do you suppose is the reason that Christian Scientists use it, when they are sick?"

"Well," I said, "I suppoes it is because you think it would be wrong to have a doctor, — and because you want to be consistent and — " I could n't think of any other reason.

"You 've left out a rather important point," she said

"What is it?"

"*That they wish to get well!*"

"Oh!"

" — and that, quickly, — and to stay well. I think that is a fairly good reason in itself. Don't you?"

"But they don't — always."

"Do doctors' patients — always?"

"No. But, honestly, if you were very, very sick, would n't you be afraid not to have a physician?"

"Why, Chet, I 'd a million times rather trust the case to a Christian Science practitioner. Not but that the doctors are honest and noble and good, but I believe that Christian Science treats the real causes, clear down at the foundation of the trouble, — like taking away the reason for the sorrow, instead of putting something in your eyes to stop the tears."

"But," I said, "there are some other ways of healing without medicine, — and they seem to really cure people sometimes, too. Why are n't those as good as Christian Science, if they heal?"

"Well," said Bess, "suppose that when you were a little, wee boy, you had wakened up one night and thought that there was a tiger under your bed. And suppose you had gotten up and run to your mother and told her about it, and she had comforted you and told you that there was no tiger there, and explained to you that there were no tigers loose in this country, and even if there had been, one could n't get into the house and under your bed; and then she would take a light

and go with you and show you that there was nothing there, and *could* be nothing there, and that there was nothing to be afraid of. Then you would know the truth, and would n't have any more fear, and every time that you wakened up frightened, after that, you 'd know that there was nothing to be afraid of, and the fright would leave you right off.

"Now, suppose that when you were first frightened, you had gone to some one else instead of your mother, and he had humored you and said: – 'Oh, dear me, is there really a tiger under your bed? Is n't that dreadful? We 'll have to shoot him.' And then he 'd get a gun and fire under the bed and then run back to you and slam the door. And the next morning there would be no tiger there, and you would think that it had been driven away; and your fear would be gone. But the next night you would waken up as before, and be sure that the tiger had come back, and you would run to the person again, in a panic, and it would have to be driven out once more, – and again next week and again next month, – and you would get so that you would be in constant fear of it, and you would suffer as much as if

there really were a tiger to come and be driven away.

"Now do you see the difference? In both cases, the fear is quieted, and you go back to sleep. With your mother's treatment, the ignorance from which you were suffering is destroyed right at the start, and so it does n't come back again; or if it seems to for a moment, as soon as you remember the facts, it is gone, and you get out of the habit of thinking of it. But with the other way of handling it, the person is working all the time to drive out the tiger, instead of proving that there is n't any; and so that tiger or another one keeps on coming back — and back, and you never do get over being frightened about it; and by and by the fear of it may eat you up, even if there is n't any tiger to do the job."

"I see," I said. "To be healed just physically by *any* means, is only to try to drive away the tiger; — but to know the truth and in *that* way wipe out the thing that you called sickness, — is to get rid of the article that made a noise like a tiger, for keeps. He *can't* come back when you know he *is n't!*"

"Good," said Bess. "I 'm glad you 're doing

some thinking. Lots of folks seem to think that the idea of the text-book is —

> "'Open your mouth and shut your eyes,
> And I 'll give you something to make you wise,'

but it is n't that way at all; — it gives you something to think about. No one ever got wisdom by swallowing it whole, any more than he 'd get a vocabulary by swallowing a dictionary; — it comes only through studying, and working, and contemplating, and proving. If you don't chew things, you 'll get mental indigestion, — unless you 're just shovelling them into a bag and looking pleasant, the way Bean-stalk Jack did with the hasty pudding."

I got up and stretched my arms. "Bess," I said, "that word 'chew' reminds me of something. You get the chocolate and sugar in shape, and I 'll crack the butternuts."

CHAPTER XV

THAT OTHER GIRL AGAIN

I WAS awfully busy during March. Just as soon as there was a breath of Spring in the air, and the kids were starting in with stilts and marbles, we boys got to figuring on our base-ball team. The team had been a dead one the year before, and we could n't quite make up our minds whether to disband and quit for keeps, or to make another try for it. We had been whipped by every club in the neighborhood last year, and had scrapped among ourselves until I actually believe that every fellow was glad when he struck out, just to spite the team. It was plain to be seen that we 'd got to do something different, or else quit entirely. Some of us were for quitting, and some others for beginning early and doing a lot of practice work and trying to get into shape to do some good playing by the time the season opened. I was with the latter bunch; I do hate to give up that I 'm beaten!

We were talking it over one day and scrapping, as usual, when one of the boys came out with an

idea. There was a fellow in town, staying with some relatives of his, who used to be in the National League, and we boys always walked backward to stare at him, whenever he passed. Well, the boy with the idea put it this way: he said, "Let 's go and see if we can't get Mason to coach our club for a few weeks!" What Mason did n't know about base-ball, was n't worth knowing, for he 'd done some great work when he was on the diamond, had been short-stop, — and if anybody has to keep busy, and have his wits about him every second of the time, it 's the short-stop in a base-ball game.

Well, sir, we did n't know whether he would be willing to help us out or not, but we appointed a committee to go and see him right then, — and we waited while they went.

They came back on the dead run, and said he 'd be glad to do it, and would n't charge us a cent, either. You bet we had a regular jamboree celebrating, that afternoon.

So, from that time on, I was kept busy after school and Saturdays, and the month went mighty fast. Bob Stevens was away when we started in to train with our coach, and the day he got back,

which was Saturday, he came out and sat on the fence of the lot where we were practising. He did n't say much, but he watched, with his chin in the air, and I knew he was thinking crosswise. When I started home, he walked along with me.

"We 're doing pretty good work, don't you think?" I asked.

"Yes," said Bob; "— a lot better than last year."

"We got some good plays in to-day, did n't we?"

"Yep. I 'm not going in for ball this year. I brought back a bigger electric engine, and I 've got some books, and I 'm going into that for all it 's worth. I always did intend to be an electrician, and I 'm going to put in this Spring and Summer studying and experimenting."

"Good!" I said. "You know a lot more about it than any other fellow in school, now."

"That is n't saying much. I saw a good deal of electric machinery while I was gone, though, and picked up some ideas. Chet, it 's the most wonderful thing in the world, — it really is."

"Wish you were going to be on the ball team, though," I said.

Bob shook his head. "I made up my mind not to, before I came home; but if I had n't, I 'd have decided that way to-day."

"You would? Why? Are n't we doing good work?"

"Yes, but I would n't let any one boss me the way you let Mason boss you."

My jaw dropped. "Why, for goodness' sake," I said, "what do you suppose we let him tell us what to do, for?"

"Well, I would n't let any one tell me, no matter what it was for. I want freedom! I don't give any one the right to tell me what to do, — and you all obey just as meekly as little lambs."

"And why should n't we? Does n't he know a thousand times as much about base-ball as all of the rest of us put together? Has n't he had the practice, and the experience? That 's what we wanted him to help us for, — so he could advise us and tell us the best way to get results. We used to make errors right and left, because we could n't see far enough ahead in the game; — but he 's got us to thinking quick and thinking right. Even if we can't always see at a glance why we should do as he says, — when we 've

done it, we see the reason in the end; for it always proves to be the very best thing to be done under the circumstances. We don't have to obey him for one second if we don't want to, — we can just quit, but when we look at the sort of work that we 're doing this year, compared to what we did last year, — well, you bet you don't see any of us quitting, nor talking back, either! We do what he says, because we know it 's the way for us to get to playing winning ball, that 's why! I 've got plenty of spirit and independence, but I 'm not too conceited to do what a person advises, when I 've accepted him as a coach just for the very reason that I *want* him to tell me,— because he understands better than I do."

"Well," said Bob, "it 's your own affair, of course, but it looks funny to me to see you taking another person's 'say so.'"

Just then Bess came around the corner on her wheel. She jumped off and we waited for her.

Bob was in one of his critical moods that day, and as soon as she had said "Hello," he started in. "Bess, I heard you 'd got to be a Christian Scientist."

"Yes," said Bess, quietly, "I am a Christian Scientist."

I glanced at her. Her face was pink and her eyes were shining, and I saw that her hand was gripped hard on her handle-bar. I knew that it was just about the biggest moment of her life. It was the first time that she had felt worthy to stand up and say, — "Yes, I am a Christian Scientist," and I wanted to pat her on the back.

"Why?" asked Bess, after a moment.

"Oh, nothing," said Bob, "only I was surprised, because I thought you were too clear-headed to look at anybody that way."

"What way?"

"Oh, to worship any human being, and think she is supernatural, and all that, the way Christian Scientists do their leader."

Bess did n't even look cross. "Bob," she said, "who has done more than any one else in the world to help you to be what you most want to be?"

"Edison," said Bob.

"How?"

"Why, by his work, and his study, and his demonstration of what can be done, and his under-

standing! Look at the time that man has put in, and the experiments, and the successes. He 's the most wonderful man alive!"

"And are n't you grateful to him?"

"*Am* I? Well, say, how many years do you think it would have taken me to find out for myself the things that he 's worked out and made plain for me, and so I can use them? I could n't have done it in a life-time; — but he 's put his life-time in it, and I can have for the mere reading, the conclusions of all of his years of study and experiment. Because of his thinking and his investigation, and because he is too generous to keep it to himself, I can start now with years and years of work to the good. Well, I should say I am grateful!"

"And you 're not ashamed of studying his methods and demonstrations? You 're willing that every one should know that you think him a wonderful man, and that you are indebted to him?"

"Well, I 'd like to get up on the house-top and talk about it!"

"But the biggest thing of all is your gratitude, is n't it?"

"It sure is!"

"Well, that is the way that we Christian Scientists feel, Bob. We are *grateful* more than anything else, — grateful from the bottoms of our hearts to her for giving us the results of her study and work and demonstration. We see the years of wrongly directed effort, and unhappiness, and pain, that she has saved us from, and the start that she has given us toward doing our work right for all time, because she has shared with us the fruit of her labor; — and why should n't we be grateful, and why should n't we be glad to admit that we are indebted to her for the help that has come to us? If you feel that way about Edison, who has helped you in just material things, is n't it natural that we should feel the same, only ever and ever so much stronger, since she has helped us to know how to live best for all time?"

"But," said Bob, "the feeling that I have is just wholesome gratitude, — and a good deal of reverence and wonder, of course, — for one who has accomplished what he has, and given it to the world; but I don't worship him, nor think him supernatural."

"And neither do we either worship our leader,

or think her supernatural. Did you ever hear a Christian Scientist say that we did?"

"No."

"Well, don't you think that Christian Scientists ought to know better than other people what they themselves believe?"

"Sure."

"Then listen to one now. Not one Christian Scientist looks upon the author of our text-book with worship, or as in any way supernatural; but they are all wholesomely grateful, and love her and look upon her with the reverence that one *must* feel for a person who has done such a great work; — and I 'll wager you anything you like," she wound up, "that you will never, as long as you live, find a Christian Scientist who will tell you anything different."

"Then why do people say such things?"

"Because they don't know any better and won't take the trouble to find out, and would rather accept the word of an outsider, who says something unpleasant, than that of one who knows, but says only something which has common sense to it. People are always chasing after unusual and surprising stories, and when they can't find

them, they manufacture them to order, and pass them on."

"That makes me think," said Bob, laughing, "of a couple of kids I heard talking the other day, while they were looking at my engine. One of them had got Jove and Edison mixed up, and thought that Edison was responsible for thunder-storms. I butted in and tried to tell them that he was just a man like their dad, only a lot smarter; and the one who was sure, came at me with a newspaper clipping that called Edison a 'wizard.' He had looked the word up in the dictionary, so that settled the matter. There was n't any use in trying to tell them anything, in the face of that piece of newspaper; and the last I heard, they were planning to write to Edison and ask him not to send any thunder-storms this Summer, because their little sister was afraid of them."

We all laughed. The thunder-storm had cleared the air, and when Bob left us at his corner, Bess and I walked on, in a mighty good humor. We 'd got to where we could talk over that other girl without a single ugly thought. I 'd been reading in the book considerably mornings and evenings, and it sort of seemed as if I 'd got into the habit

of looking for nice things in people, a good deal as I looked for things I could understand in the book. Anyway, it seemed as if folks were nicer to me, and Mother's face got to smoothing out when I came in, instead of tightening up. I had n't realized before how many of the lines in her face meant *me*. It was good to see them smooth out. I was n't altogether an angel, though, — not by any means.

That day, when I reached home, I passed Mother in the hall. "Chester," she said, "I wish you 'd go into Gordon's this afternoon, when you 're down town, and get me some samples of wall-paper. I thought I could manage to go down this week and select it, but I have n't been able to find the time."

"What color?" I asked.

"Well, I think blue would be nice, would n't it? It 's for the southwest room."

"Why don't you get yellow — plain yellow, with a brown frieze? The furniture is oak, is n't it?"

Mother looked pleased. "I believe that would be better," she said.

"Not bright yellow," I said, " — just a sort of creamy yellow, that will go well with the brown."

"All right," said Mother. "Just select it for me, will you, Chet? Never mind about the samples."

"You going to put *her* in there?" I asked.

"Yes. I 'd give her the guest-chamber, only it 's north exposure, and would be dismal in winter; and besides, the furnace is n't to be depended upon for that room; — but the southwest room is all right, only the clothes-press is so small," and she shook her head. "But she 'll manage all right," she added.

"When 's she coming?" I asked.

"The sixth of April."

I did n't wait for any more, but went on upstairs to have a look at the room and see where the desk would go best. I had n't tried to picture the girl at all, for fear that she would be in some way different, and it might make it harder, — and I 'd made up my mind to be just as decent as I could

When I went into the room, it some way did n't look good to me. Mother had been using it for a sewing room, and there were a lot of boxes and baskets setting round. It was awfully small, too. I went and put my head into the clothes-press,

--yes, that was small, and the top of it sloped because the attic stairs went up over it. I took a look into the guest-chamber; but that was dismal and chilly, and I shut the door quick and went back to the small room. There was a west window, and there was a south window, and that would make it awfully hot in summer; but there was a good place for the desk, with a gas jet right over it, and that was something. Then I went to my room.

When I got there, I stood and stared around. It was the southeast room, and the biggest room on that floor. I had built in my book-shelves, and made a large square table against the wall, to draw on, and I had everything just the way I wanted it. I surely had taken a lot of comfort in that room.

I looked it over, and then I went and took another sight at the southwest room, and mentally laid it out all over; and then I went back and tumbled my books onto the floor and got a hammer and started to knock off the top shelf. Then I stopped and thought for a while, and then I put the books back.

I went into the southwest room and gathered

up Mother's truck and carried it into the guest-chamber and dumped it just anywhere, and moved in the machine, and the boxes and mending chest, and then sized up the room again. After that I went and dragged in my table and set it by the window, where I had intended the desk to go, and then I hauled in the rest of my stuff, and was just sawing one of the shelves that I 'd taken from the guest-chamber clothes-press, to start some new book-shelves, when Mother came in. She only stood and stared for a moment, and then her face flushed up young and pretty. She did n't ask any questions, or bother, she just said, — "Thank you, Chester," — and said it *hard*, — and then went on about her business. I tell you, Mother is about the most sensible woman that I know!

After dinner, I went and got Bess to go down town with me to help pick out the paper, and to order the desk sent up; and when we had attended to those things, we went over to our store.

Uncle Rob was just starting out to do some collecting as we went in, and we found that Miss Weed was having a day off, so Dad was all alone for a little while; - and it took only two

"She only stood and stared for a moment"

seconds to see that he had one of his re-arranging streaks on. He was pulling things down from the shelves and sputtering about the dust, and as soon as I hove in sight, he said that I was just in time, because he had decided to take down the big Japanese umbrella that hung from the ceiling, and told me to go and get the step-ladder.

I brought it, but I tell you it was something of a trick to carry such a long step-ladder between a hundred and twenty feet of glass show-cases! I set it up under the umbrella and Dad went up.

Now the umbrella was fastened to a hook in the ceiling, and the ceiling is about seventeen feet high, — and Dad is only five-feet-six. The step-ladder was a mighty tall one, though, and Dad went up all right until he was about three steps from the top, and could get hold of the handle of the umbrella. He thought that all he had to do was to take it by the handle and lift it off of the hook, but it would n't lift off.

"Shut it down," I said, "and then you can see what 's the matter."

He went up another step, holding on to the umbrella to steady himself, and managed to press the spring, and then went down a step until he

could get the thing closed tight, — and then he tried to lift it off.

He tried and tried, but he could n't loosen the wire in the top, which seemed to be tangled into the hook. "That comes of using picture-wire instead of a screw-eye!" he sputtered, — and then he went up another step. That made him so high that the ladder seemed a little wabbly, and he told us to steady it. Bess took the straight side, and I took the step side, and we braced it; but still he could n't get the thing undone.

He was on next to the top step, and holding onto the umbrella, but he could n't reach the hook with his hands, and he could n't lift or jerk the wire off.

"I 'll have to go up on the top," he said, "Hold her firm," and he steadied himself with the umbrella and stepped one foot onto the top step; and then, as he still could n't reach, he drew the other one up very carefully. That top step was dreadfully narrow, so that half of his heels were off on one side, and the most of his toes on the other; but it put him high enough so that he could rest just about an inch of his fingers on the

ceiling, and that held him all right, though he was awfully high up.

He took as firm a stand as he could, and braced the fingers of one hand against the ceiling, and with the other began untwisting the wire. He had to change hands every minute or two, to rest, because he was holding his arms up so straight. But at last he had it undone, and commenced to lower it carefully with one hand, while he kept in touch with the ceiling with the other. I reached for it when the wire had let it down far enough, but Dad shouted, —

"Stay where you are — stay where you are! Don't wabble this step-ladder!"

He let it down as far as the wire would take it, and then dropped it. "It 's worn out, anyway," he said.

It landed all right, and he put his hand back up to the ceiling while he rested the other, before starting down. Then he put the other back again and stood there.

I thought maybe he was waiting for me to hand him something and had forgotten that he had n't told me to, and so I said, —

"What you doing?"

"W-wait a minute," he said, and he took down one hand, — and then he put it back and took down the other.

Bess and I stood and stared. "What 's the matter?" I said. "Why don't you come down?"

Dad did n't say anything; but he shifted his weight a little, and then he drew one foot off of the step backward and lowered it about an inch, — and then suddenly sort of shook it, the way a cat does when it puts its foot into cold water, and put it back quick.

Bess and I looked at each other. "Why don't you come down?" I asked, again.

Dad did n't swear; but he waited several words long, and then he said, between his teeth, — ". . . . I can't."

"Well, why —" I began, — and then I saw the situation. When he went up onto the top, he had steadied himself with the umbrella, — but now it was gone, and there was nothing but the tips of his fingers on the ceiling to hold him. Of course, that was all right as long as he was on the top step; but just as soon as he went to put one foot down, it drew his hands away, and left him trying to balance on one foot on a five-inches-

wide step, ten feet in the air, — and Dad never was much of a gymnast.

Bess's eyes met mine, and then we turned our heads away, quick.

"Stop jiggling that ladder, will you?" sputtered Dad; and then he tried the other foot, and got it down farther than he did the first one, — and jerked it back quicker — and just then the front door opened and old Mrs. Davis came in.

I was facing the door, and so was Dad. Mrs. Davis looked around cheerfully as she came in, — and then she caught sight of Dad, up on the step-ladder.

"Oh, *there's* Mr. Williams!" she said, smiling. "Mr. Williams, I want you to show me some solid silver spoons. I want one for my little granddaughter's birthday." And then she waited.

Dad did the wet-cat act again, and changed hands; but did n't say a word.

"You 're not too busy, are you, Mr. Williams?" she asked, winningly, not seeing him getting down very fast.

"H-m — well — " said Dad, "The — the fact is, I can't come down."

"Could n't you do that up there some other

time?" asked Mrs. Davis, sweetly. "Her birthday is to-morrow, you know, and I give her a silver spoon on every birthday." And then she waited again.

Dad's arms were getting tired, I noticed, for he changed hands oftener than he did at first, and his knees kept bending; but he straightened them out quick every time, for they shortened his height.

Mrs. Davis said, "H-m?"

"But you see, I — I can't come down," said Dad.

"You got to finish what you 're doing up there now?" she asked, and her voice sounded sorry.

"Chet," said Dad, "hold that ladder still! I say, Mrs. Davis, that I *can't* come down,— I 'm not able, — I — I have n't anything to hold on to; — see — " and he gave his foot another jerk, for the lady.

Mrs. Davis came closer and put on her glasses. "Why don't you just put your foot down on the next step?" she asked.

Dad did n't answer, — he just stood there with his hands above his head, looking like Hercules holding up the world, only it was on the tips of his fingers, instead of his shoulders.

"Well, I suppose I 'll have to come in again, if you can't come down now," said Mrs. Davis, and heaved a sigh and trotted out.

"Why don't you *do* something?" said Dad, as soon as the door was shut. "I don't want the whole town to come in while I 'm up here!"

"I could come up behind you and hold your ankles," I suggested.

"Don't you dare step a foot on that ladder!" shouted Dad.

"I could go in next door and borrow another ladder," said Bess.

"Don't you let go, don't you let go for an instant!" sputtered Dad. "I don't want a bunch of people in here, anyway."

"Perhaps I could stand on a chair — " I began.

"Do it then," said Dad. "Here, did n't I tell you not to let go of that step-ladder? What 're you trying to do, anyway?"

Just then the door opened and in came Uncle Rob. "Oh, you took the umbrella down, did n't you?" he said, smiling approvingly. "I think it looks a lot better without it."

No one said anything, and Dad just changed hands.

"Huh?" said Uncle Rob, staring at us.

Bess and I did n't dare speak, — and Dad did n't want to.

"Coming down now?" asked Uncle Rob.

And then Bess and I exploded and Dad howled. I told you he had no sense of humor.

It took Uncle Rob a full minute to grasp the situation, — and then he swallowed something big.

"I 'll go and get another step-ladder," he said, and started for the door.

"Don't you do it, — don't you do it!" called Dad. "I won't have them all in here. Get up on a chair and hold my feet."

Uncle Rob climbed on a chair and reached up.

"Leggo my ankles, — leggo my ankles!" shouted Dad, shaking the step-ladder and trying to kick without moving his feet.

Uncle Rob dropped his hands, and Dad groaned.

I began to get worried about that time; for I knew his arms were nearly breaking, so he could n't keep them up much longer, — and his knees were wabbling more and more all the time; and I did n't know what the dickens we were going to do — and then Bess had an idea.

"Steady this," she said to Uncle Rob, and then she chased to the rear of the store and came back with a window-brush, that 's on the end of a long pole so it will reach to the top of the windows. Uncle Rob saw the point, and as soon as she had taken her place at the ladder again, he took it and reached it up to Dad. Dad took hold of it and Uncle Rob held hard, and in a moment Dad was back down three steps, and sitting on the top one rubbing his arms and legs.

"Why did n't some of you do that a long time ago?" he said.

I had n't told Bess that I had given up my room, and she thought that the paper was for the south-west room; and I did n't tell her until it was all papered and finished, and I had sand-papered the book-shelves and done them over to match things better; and the desk had been brought up and put in place, — and then I had her come over to see.

She was as good as Mother for she did n't palaver a bit, but just showed by her eyes and face how she felt about it. She had brought over the writing set and a pottery jug that she had made in school, and she said that she would have some

daffodils in her window-box, to put in the jug when the day came, — and it was less than a week off.

And how that week did fly! The sixth came on Saturday, and though we saw preparations, the folks kept their promise about not talking to us about it. We did n't know what time she was to arrive, but Bess came over early, right after breakfast, with the daffodils, and we put them in the jug on the desk, and Bess smoothed out the embroidered cloth on the table, and looked into the dresser drawers to see if there were fresh papers, and we brought in two or three of my books that we thought she might like, and put them on the book-shelves, — and a couple of magazines on the table, — and we patted everything all into place, and then went down and put up the hammock on the veranda — it was time it was out, anyway.

We sat there and talked and watched the street and tried to be interested in what we were saying — until by and by Bess just *had* to go home, because her father was in town for a few days, and

she wanted to be with him all she could. She told me to whistle when the girl had got there, though.

I thought I 'd go back up to the room and see if everything was all right; and as I went through the dining-room way, the first thing I saw was the dinner-table set for *four!* My heart gave a jump. She was coming before dinner, — she would be here in less than an hour! I rushed back to the veranda; but Bess was out of sight, and so I went on up stairs and put the jug of flowers on the table, instead of on the desk; and then I remembered that Bess had put it on the desk, and so I put it back, and moved around the magazines some, and looked in the dresser glass to see if it was clear, and tied my necktie over again, because one end was skew-haw, — and then I went back to the veranda. Gee, but the time did go slow!

It was a warm day, and it seemed sort of good to be in the hammock again, and hearing the old hooks and staples creak the way they did last Summer. I was just remembering how they sounded the day I first heard that that other girl

was coming, — and here I was sitting and waiting for her, and my collar was choking, and I was screwing my neck in it! — when suddenly I heard Bess come rushing through the hedge and across the lawn. As she came around the house and onto the walk, I saw that her arms were flying and her eyes shining just as they always do when something big is in the air, and she was catching her breath and chuckling away down inside, and calling, — "Chet, Chet!" in a funny little excited way, as if her voice was n't working right, - and her mouth and eyes were all alive with smiles.

"O Chet, *Chet*, CHET!" she cried, rushing up the steps and flopping down into the hammock beside me and grabbing my arm.

"Well," I said, "it seems to please you some!"

"Oh, it does, — it does! What do you think — and everybody thought we knew, — and we never even guessed!"

"W-e-l-l, — go on," I said.

"Why, don't you see, Chet, — Father just told me, — he 's going away on a long trip, — to

Europe, and everywhere, — and he 's going to be gone a year or two, — and we 're going to break up housekeeping, and — "

"Nice news for *me*," I said.

"Oh, but wait, Chet! You don't understand. There was n't any other place for me; — and, oh, Chet, can't you see? — can't you see? — your mother was my mother's very best friend; — and *I 'm* that other girl!"

THE END